BLESSING AND CURSING IN MALACHI

A READER-ORIENTED APPROACH

ANDY R. ESPINOZA

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Blessing and Cursing in Malachi

A Reader-Oriented Approach

Proefschrift

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PREFACE

A passing comment by the late Dr. Kenneth Mulzac in a Hebrew class sparked an interest in the book of Malachi that has remained for the last two decades. This interest has grown to include other prophetic literature and the way authors use texts to persuade.

It was a "coincidence" which allowed this project to happen. Prof. Dr. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, who practiced a method of biblical exegesis which I found very appealing, would just happen to visit Caracas and was available and willing to discuss my research idea. The result of that meeting was a journey of learning and growing, in many areas of life, not just academics. I got to meet and work with a scholar, a perfectionist, someone very generous and hospitable, and the fastest email response time I have seen in my life, manuscript corrections included. I also got the privilege of working on this project with Prof. Dr. Bart J. Koet, who shared many of Archibald's virtues and added an eye for consistency and correctness in methods, and connections to other disciplines. I was fortunate to have two perfectionists helping me pay attention to completely different sets of details. I am grateful for the insightful comments and remarks I received from the members of the PhD Committee, Prof. Dr. P. C. Beentjes, Prof. Dr. J. Eck, Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel, and Prof. Dr. C. H. C. M. Vander Stichele. I was also fortunate to have Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister read my manuscript and help correct my English. Of course, any errors or omissions that remain are mine. The faculty and personnel of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology have been very helpful and friendly. I am also grateful to have had a mentor and friend in the late Dr. Emmer Chacon who encouraged me to his last days.

This project came to fruition, thanks to the flexibility allowed by the Adventist Theological Seminary in Venezuela, the Gulf Field of Seventh-day Adventists, and the East Mediterranean Region of Seventh-day Adventists. The writing of this work, much longer and more accidented than expected, started in Venezuela, flourished in the United Arab Emirates, and came to completion in Lebanon, with a few hugely productive stints in the Netherlands.

Daily, I am done. Now is your turn.

Esther and Sarai, I did it. Thanks for encouraging me and reminding me that I had worked on this project for too long.

Mum, I am sorry dad is not around to celebrate this milestone. I know he would be proud. I know you are.

The text in your hands is the result of years of work, too many if you ask my daughters! This text has been a part of my life as I taught, pastored, and coordinated projects. Now I hope that this text will help you listen to the Text-Internal Author of the Book of Malachi as he uses syntactic, semantic, and communicational tools to get the Text-Internal Reader to trust in God and return to him. Will you also do that?

Andy R. Espinoza.

Beirut, April 2024.

SUMMARY

The book of Malachi is very seldom referenced in Christian devotion or worship. A rare exception may be as an offering appeal during public worship. But is there more to Malachi than an offering appeal? Furthermore, what is the point of such a strong curse at the end of the text that many Jewish people to this day refuse to end the reading of the book with its last verse?

In this study, a reader-oriented approach is applied to the text of Malachi seeking to uncover fresh insights, especially as it relates to blessing and cursing in the book.

This reader-oriented approach is a three-step process that allows the researcher to analyze a text from complementing perspectives. The first step of the analysis is the study of the syntax of the text. Here the internal structure of the text is described revealing its organization and flow. The second step is the study of semantics. Here main themes in the text and their relationship come to the fore. The last step is the analysis of the communication between the Text-Internal Author and the Text-Internal Reader. These are literary constructs that facilitate the study of a text unincumbered by historical issues, issues which are many times virtually impossible to determine with regard to biblical texts.

The syntax of Malachi reveals that it is formed by fifteen textual units, organized in a heading, two main sections, and a conclusion. There are six main semantic themes in the text of Malachi: relationships, covenant, messenger, blessings and curses, justice, and the day of the Lord. Notably, liturgical aspects are not a main semantic element in the text. The communication in the text reveals that the Text-Internal Author uses blessing and cursing as a tool to move the characters and the Text-Internal Reader to proper relationship with God and among themselves.

The reader-oriented approach proved an effective tool in revealing fresh insights into the text of Malachi. Such a tool can surely be profitably employed to study other prophetic texts.

SAMENVATTING

In de christelijke liturgie en devotie wordt zeer zelden naar het boek Maleachi verwezen. Een sporadische uitzondering is een offeroproep tijdens de openbare eredienst. Maar houdt Maleachi meer in dan een oproep totoffergave? Wat is bovendien het nut van zo'n sterke vloek aan het eindevan de tekst zodat veel joodse mensen tot op de dag van vandaag weigerenhet lezen van het boek te beëindigen met het laatste vers?

In deze studie wordt een lezer-georiënteerde benadering toegepast op de tekst van Maleachi, waarbij geprobeerd wordt nieuwe inzichten te ontdekken, vooral met betrekking tot zegeningen en vloeken in dit Bijbelboek.

Deze lezer-georiënteerde benadering bestaat uit drie stappen waarmee de onderzoeker een tekst vanuit complementaire perspectieven kan analyseren. De eerste stap van de analyse is de studie van de syntaxis van de tekst. Hiermee wordt de interne structuur van de tekst beschreven, waardoor de organisatie en samenhang ervan zichtbaar wordt. De tweede stap is de studie van de semantiek. Hier komen de belangrijkste thema's uit de tekst en hun cohesie naar voren. De laatste stap is de analyse van de communicatie tussen de tekst-interne auteur en de tekst-interne lezer. Deze zijn literaire constructies die de studie van een tekst faciliteren, niet gehinderd door historische kwesties, kwesties die vaak vrijwel onmogelijk te bepalen zijn met betrekking tot Bijbelteksten.

De syntaxis van Maleachi laat zien dat deze tekst uit vijftien tekstuele eenheden bestaat, georganiseerd in een opschrift, twee hoofdsecties en een conclusie. Er zijn zes belangrijke semantische thema's in de tekst van Maleachi: relaties, verbond, boodschapper, zegen en vloek, gerechtigheid en de dag des Heren. Opvallend is dat liturgische aspecten geen afzonderlijk semantisch thema vormen in de tekst. Uit de communicatie in de tekst blijkt dat de tekst-interne auteur zegen en vloek gebruikt als instrument om de personages en de tekst-interne lezer naar een juiste relatie met God en met elkaar te bewegen.

De lezer-georiënteerde benadering is gebleken een effectief instrument te zijn om nieuwe inzichten in de tekst van Maleachi te onthullen. Een dergelijk instrument kan zeker op vruchtbare wijze worden gebruikt om andere profetische teksten te bestuderen.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past, the academic study of the books in the collection of the Twelve, and the collection itself as a whole, had been largely neglected. Particularly, the book of Malachi had suffered neglect. The last decades, however, have seen a marked increase on the research being produced with regards to the Twelve, and the book of Malachi in particular. The book of Malachi has recently received excellent treatments, including analyses using a range of literary methods. Nonetheless, the blessings and curses of the book of Malachi have not yet been studied using the methods of discourse analysis focusing on the internal communication in the text.

This study, entitled *Blessing and Cursing in Malachi: A Reader-Oriented Approach*, analyses the communication between the Text-Internal Author (TIA) and the Text-Internal Reader (TIR) in the book of Malachi. Special attention is given to the use of blessing and cursing and how this is used to impact the characters and the TIR.

The Reader-Oriented Approach is a three-step process that allows the researcher to analyze a text from complementing perspectives. The first step of this study is a syntactic analysis of the text, resulting in its division into units and the establishing of relations between those units. The second step of the study involves the analysis of semantic themes, especially the theme of blessing and cursing, and a discussion of how this theme unites and shapes the message of the book. The third and last section of the study centers on the pragmatics of communication between the TIA and the TIR, noting the communicational implications of blessing and cursing in the book.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the comparative recent abundance of studies on the book of Malachi, it remains a fairly unexplored book of the Hebrew Scriptures. About a decade ago it was still very accurate to say that "little importance has been attributed to the book of Malachi by scholars."[1] Nonetheless, the book has received more attention recently. But that attention has not always been positive. The perceived heavy emphasis on liturgical aspects, emptying the book of ethical weight; the diachronic speculations about the composition of the book,[2] turning it into little more than an afterthought to complete the collection of the Twelve; and the supposed anonymous character of the work, disconnecting it from other prophetic books with clearly identifiable narrators

1. John T. Day, *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 531 (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 354.
2. The use of the term "speculation" may seem pejorative and/or condescending. The way I use it in this work denotes conclusions that cannot be objectively proven or disproven given the absence of external evidence.

or protagonists, have resulted to lowering the value of the book in the eyes of some so that "the book of Malachi has often been disparaged in modern scholarship."[3]

Besides the poor image of the book in the eyes of some scholars, there is limited awareness of the presence and function of blessing and cursing in the book. This should concern the biblical scholar, since blessing and cursing are very relevant and pervasive elements of the Hebrew Scriptures, so much so that they have been used to explore its theology as a whole.[4] The study of blessing and cursing in the last book of the section of the Prophets in the Hebrew canon and the entire Old Testament in the Christian canon should be both a focus of attention and a source of valuable insights for the interpretation of the book, the Prophets, and the Old Testament in general.

Given the preceding, there is need for a study that takes Malachi as a literary composition and studies the communicational impact of the use of blessing and cursing in the text.

Purpose of the Study

This literary study seeks to analyze how blessing and cursing is used in the book of Malachi and what is their communicational impact. The focus of study is the communication between the TIA and the TIR in the book of Malachi. Of particular interest is the use of blessing and cursing by the TIA as a communicational tool to influence the TIR.

Blessing and cursing are about communication, and this form of communication is complex. On the one hand, the characters in the text speak about and to other characters using blessing and cursing. On the other hand, blessing and cursing also have a function towards the TIR. So, at least, a double communication arises: one on the level of the characters and another on the level of the TIA and TIR. Communication-oriented exegesis has eye for both levels.

In this context, the following questions arise: how do the methods of discourse analysis, focusing on the TIA and TIR, help us understand the blessing and cursing present in the book of Malachi? How is the TIR presented in Malachi? How is blessing

3. R. J. Coggins and Jin Hee. Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries 29 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 187.
4. See, Jeff S. Anderson, *The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the Theology of the Old Testament* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014).

and cursing designed to affect him?[5] How do these insights help in understanding the book of Malachi as a whole?

Justification and Importance of the Study

This study intends to contribute to several areas of knowledge. First, it is relevant for literary scholarship in general and Biblical scholarship in particular, because it will contribute to the development of the reader-oriented approach within discourse analysis. The application of the methods of discourse analysis focusing on the TIA and TIR will serve to further test the methodology and the results of its application to prophetic texts.

Second, this study is relevant for biblical exegesis, since it will contribute to the knowledge of the book of Malachi and the genre of blessing and cursing. Although many studies have recently been undertaken, the book has not been analyzed from a reader-oriented approach, particularly the function and effect of blessing and cursing in the book towards the TIR and how that affects the overall message of the book. Similarly, there are genre-critical and sociological studies on blessings and curses, but no reader-oriented studies on the genre.[6]

Third, for society, especially for Christians, this study is relevant because Malachi is very seldom a center of attention in communities of faith, and when it is, it is usually in connection to tithes and offerings.[7] This, despite the fact that the book is relatively frequently alluded to in the New Testament, even by Jesus himself. This investigation will deal with rarely explored aspects of the book of Malachi and so will surely unveil a distinct message, a message that may prove highly relevant for believers today. For these reasons I hope that the present study will prove an important contribution.

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5. I use masculine pronouns, instead of neutral ones, when discussing the theoretical entities TIA and TIR. When using the term "reader", I endeavor to mention whether I am referring to a real or a theoretical reader.
6. Kit Barker, *Imprecation as Divine Discourse: Speech Act Theory, Dual Authorship, and Theological Interpretation*, Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplements 16 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016); Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 3 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Delbert R. Hillers, "Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets" (Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).
7. See, Andreas J. Köstenberger and David A. Croteau, "'Will a Man Rob God?' (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16 (2006): 53.

Delimitations

In this study, I will focus on the text with the aim of understanding what it does and how it does it.[8] I will limit myself to a synchronic analysis of the final form of the text of Malachi as present in the Leningrad Codex and rendered in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.[9] Furthermore, I will not deal with the relationship between Malachi and other books in the collection of the Twelve, issues regarding the supposed evolution of oral sayings or written texts,[10] nor with speculations about psychological aspects such as emotional estates or motivations of real authors and readers.

The choice to focus exclusively on the book of Malachi, without regard to the rest of the books in the Twelve, is based primarily on considerations of practicality and interest rather than on a conviction regarding the nature of this textual collection. It must be noted, nonetheless, that despite the trend in the last decades to study the books that compose the Twelve as a unit,[11] the discussion regarding the existence of such textual unity, i.e., a book of the Twelve as opposed to a collection of the Twelve,[12] is still a matter of debate.[13] One thing appears certain, whether by original intent of the historical author or by redactional additions, the book of Malachi does seem to contain links to other books in the collection of the Twelve, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. But these connections and their implications fall outside of the scope and methodology of this research.[14]

I have chosen a literary approach completely detached from historical issues over diachronic source-critical methods, given their tendency to have an evolutionary

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8. Walter Ray Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers [Essays Delivered Orally at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature to the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Unit]* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 110, 120.
9. The complete text of the Hebrew Scriptures is yet to be published in the new *Biblia Hebraica Quinta.* Nonetheless, the section of the Twelve has already been published. See, Anthony Gelston, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Quinta: The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010).
10. For a recent collection of studies which analyze the books of the Twelve from the perspective of identifying the supposed sayings of the prophets or the redactional reworking of their sayings by scribes, see, Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, eds., *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, Ancient Near East Monographs 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).
11. Mark Leuchter, "Another Look at the Hosea/Malachi Framework in The Twelve," *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 249.
12. Nogalski has been a prolific and influential voice for the concept of a Book of the Twelve. For an anthology of his work on the concept of the Twelve, see, James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve and Beyond: Collected Essays of James D. Nogalski*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 29 (Williston: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017).
13. Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire, *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, 2.
14. For a discussion of these possible connections and the resulting implications, see, S. D. Snyman, "Malachi 4:4-6 (Heb 3:22-24) as a Point of Convergence in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible: A Consideration of the Intra and Intertextual Relationships," *HTS Theological Studies* 68 (2012): 28–33.

approach,[15] their arguably subjective and speculative nature dependent on presuppositions,[16] and the incongruent results they tend to produce.[17] The text can be studied on its own, without concerns for its supposed development through history. The reality is that much is unknown about the historical circumstances of virtually all

15. In the absence of any other form of the text, there is lack of hard evidence of any development, and it is therefore virtually impossible to prove or disprove whether editorial additions were actually made. In other words, without external control, i.e., a manuscript, it is simply not possible to tell if any redactional theory is correct or whether they are all wrong. See, E. Ray Clendenen, "Textlinguistics and Prophecy in the Book of the Twelve," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003): 398. Douglas K. Stuart, "Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," in *Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 1246.
16. Presuppositions play a major role in diachronic models. One such assumption frequently present in analyses of the evolution of oral sayings and textual layers is that prophets were capable of addressing only one issue in one fixed style and terminology in their speeches or texts. Any deviation from that one issue and style would imply a different author or redactor. In other words, prophets are seen as incapable of knowing and using synonyms or parallel structures. These assumption are both simplistic and unreasonable. See for example Joachim Schaper, who instinctively presumes a redactor as a suitable explanation for an unexpected structure in the text. See, Joachim Schaper, "The Priests in the Book of Malachi and Their Opponents," *The Priests in the Prophets*, 2004, 177. Aaron Schart argues for the existence of at least four textual layers in Malachi based on the way different terms are used, though many of these terms appear in parallel structures thus implying that they function as synonyms. Even when dealing with words which he considers are actual synonyms, and not just suspected synonyms as in a parallel structure, he advocates for different textual layers since "the terminological difference is better explained, if the passage stems from a different hand." See, Aaron Schart, "Cult and Priests in Malachi 1:6–2:9," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Ancient Near East Monographs 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 222. For an example of the role of assumptions in diachronic work on the Twelve, consider Boda, who transparently points out that the scholarly consensus about Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 forming an earlier textual unit that eventually became part of the Twelve is nothing more than an assumption. He then goes on to lists many studies and their competing redactional theories and finally moves on to defend his own take on the matter. See, Mark J. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2007): 114. See also, Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston. Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 48.
17. Similar reservations are espoused by Jennifer Dines while studying the Twelve as a whole. She provides an interesting overview of recent treatments on the Twelve from diachronic and synchronic perspectives. While espousing the overall usefulness of reading the book as a whole, she finds fault with diachronic approaches that have resulted in more than a dozen theories of textual growth, because they are usually based on historical and textual presuppositions with no clear evidence. She also finds fault with synchronic approaches that have resulted in disparate lists of themes uniting the Twelve, because presuppositions and methodologies are not always clearly specified. See, Jennifer Dines, "What Are They Saying About the Minor Prophets?," *Scripture Bulletin* 62 (2012): 2–12. In a similar way Kirk E. Lowery expresses dissatisfaction with source criticism and its identification of sources, form criticism and its identification of the social use of units, and tradition history and its pursue of the development of units. In his view, these methods provide no biblical data to support their claims. Since hypotheses are commonly based on individual speculation, the conclusions reached by scholars do not match. See, Kirk E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers [Essays Delivered Orally at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature to the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Unit]*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 104.

of the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Biblical exegesis should therefore concern itself with the issue at hand: the biblical text.[18]

There are certainly some textual difficulties in Malachi. These difficulties are most frequently recognized regarding the title (1:1) and the two concluding units of the book (3:22, 23-24), which many regard as editorial additions.[19] Some allege that the use of the term משא in Malachi 1:1, Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1 shows that Malachi was originally part of Zechariah. But even a casual reading can suffice to notice that Malachi is very different in form and substance from Zechariah. It constitutes a משא, but a different kind of משא.[20] In the case of the conclusion, Alviero Niccacci mentions several reasons why 3:22a-24d should be considered an integral part of the text and not a later addition.[21] Sheree Lear also argues that 3:24 is one of a series of allusions in Malachi to passages in Genesis 31-33 and so, 3:24 should be seen as an integral part of the original text and not as a redactional addition.[22] This goes to show how different methods can lead to different conclusions.[23] In this literary study, I take the text of Malachi as it stands and look for ways to understand rather than explain its present shape.

This study will not deal with mental estates, emotions, or motivations of real authors or audiences. Ultimately, neither diachronic nor synchronic methods can ascertain the thoughts or intentions of the real author or the real reader of any text.[24] These ends

18. Cf. Eep Talstra, "Exegesis and the Computer Science: Questions for the Text and Questions for the Computer," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 37 (1980): 123–24; Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 35 (1978): 169.
19. Innocent Himbaza, "Masoretic Text and Septuagint as Witnesses to Malachi 1:1 and 3:22-24," in *Making the Biblical Text: Textual Studies in the Hebrew and the Greek Bible*, ed. Innocent Himbaza and Mary-Gabrielle Roth-Mouthon, 2015; Ehud Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," in *Partners with God*, ed. Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov, vol. 2, Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2017), 275–96. Bob Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript," *In Die Skriflig* 53 (2019): 1.
20. Michael H. Floyd, "The מַשָּׂא (Maśśā') as a Type of Prophetic Book," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 416.
21. Alviero Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," *Liber Annuus* 51 (2001): 100–101.
22. Sheree E. Lear, "The Relationship of Scriptural Reuse to the Redaction of Malachi: Genesis 31-33 and Malachi 3.24," *Vetus Testamentum* 69 (2019): 649–69.
23. For example, Fanie Snyman lists the historical critical considerations to see 3:22-24 as a redactional addition. He also lists the ways in which this passage naturally flows from the previous text of the book, but nonetheless affirms its character as a redactional addition. Assis also demonstrates how Malachi 3:22-24 is closely connected to the previous oracles. He maintains, nonetheless, that the passage was purposefully added to conclude the book. Snyman, "Malachi 4," 2–3. Elie Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123 (2011): 208.
24. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity of the Book Isaiah*, Amsterdamse Cahiers Voor de Exegese van de Bijbel En Zijn Tradities Supplement Series 6 (Vught: Skandalon, 2006), 2.

align better with the field of psychology, and possibly necromancy, rather than Biblical exegesis.[25]

Finally, since this study focusses on describing the text-immanent communication, theological implications for real readers are usually not explored. Insights for believers are present in seminal form but are not explored or expounded.

I conclude this section by granting that diachronic methods can throw light on the development of texts. But since the objective of this research is to examine the meaning of the text, literary methods are used. Furthermore, while both methods are useful, literary methods should take precedence and color later diachronic pursuits.[26] Since so little is known about the historical aspects of Malachi and the supposed textual development of the text, it seems best to base the research on the facts of the present text rather than on speculations about its formation.

Review of Literature

From the start of this work, I have referred to pertinent works as the subject at hand requires and will continue to do so. Consequently, instead of providing an exhaustive survey of works on the book of Malachi, in this section I will provide a selective sample of recent work on Malachi, specially work that touches on literary aspects. This selectiveness stems from the purpose of this research, which is to describe the

25. For a brief discussion of psycholinguistics, see, Peter J. MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 159.
26. Eep Talstra, "Texts for Recitation: Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19," in *Unless Some One Guide Me... Festschrift for Karel A Deurloo* (Maastricht, 2000), 7. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "A Tale of Two Worlds? A Synchronic Reading of Isaiah 7:1–17 and Its Diachronic Consequences for the Book," in *The History of Isaiah: The Formation of the Book and Its Presentation of the Past*, vol. 150, Forschungen Zum Alten Testament (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 179–95. Alphonso Groenewald takes a similar approach when he presents an overview of the diachronic/synchronic debate, particularly as it relates to the South African biblical scholarship. He notes the advantages of synchronic methods, particularly taking the text as text and working within the canonical structure of the Hebrew Bible. Nonetheless, he also defends the usefulness of diachronic methods as these are the tools that explain the existence of the text. Alphonso Groenewald, "Synchrony and/or Diachrony: Is There a Way out of the Methodological Labyrinth?," in *A Critical Study of the Pentateuch: An Encounter between Europe and Africa*, ed. Eckart. Otto and Jurie Hendrik Le Roux, Altes Testament Und Moderne 20 (Münster: Lit, 2005). Van Wieringen is an example of how reader oriented strategies can be used to discern the elements that give coherence to texts such as Isa 1-39 and 40-66 which have marked textual differences. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Annemarieke van der Woude, "The Diseased King and the Diseased City (Isaiah 36-39) as a Reader-Oriented Link between Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66," in *Initiation and Mystagogy in the Christian Tradition*, Oudtestamentische Studiën (Brill, 2011), 81–93.

application and the results of a reader-oriented method to the book of Malachi, and not to list or describe the results of previous research.[27]

The two most prolific authors on Malachi currently are Bob Wielenga[28] and Blessing Onoriode Boloje.[29] Wielenga generally focusses on eschatological aspects in Malachi, while Boloje has interests across the book. Both make casual use of insights from historical critical approaches, but tend to prefer literary methods, especially semantics.

Some noteworthy recent commentaries include those by James D. Nogalski,[30] R. J. Coggins and Jin Hee Han,[31] David W. Baker,[32] Douglas Stuart,[33] and Anthony R. Petterson. The latter includes a brief but illuminating review and critique of recent studies cataloguing them by their exegetical approach. Commenting on historical-critical approaches, he notes that a major weakness of this approach is that "it is

27. Assis offers a summary of the many ways in which the contents of Malachi have been described. Elie Assis, "Mutual Recriminations: God and Israel in the Book of Malachi," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26 (2012): 212–14.
28. Bob Wielenga, "The God Who Hates: The Significance of Esau/Edom in the Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology According to Malachi 1:2-5 with a Systematic Theological Postscript," *In Die Skriflig* 56 (2022): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, "The Deuteronomic Roots of Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology in Malachi," *In Die Skriflig* 55 (2021): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, "The Gēr [Immigrant] in Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology: The Perspectives of Ezekiel 47:22–23 and Malachi 3:5," *In Die Skriflig* 54 (2020): 1–9; Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript"; Wielenga; Bob Wielenga, "The Delay of the Day of the Lord in Malachi: A Missional Reading," *In Die Skriflig* 52 (2018): 1–9; Bob Wielenga, "Eschatology in Malachi: The Emergence of a Doctrine," *In Die Skriflig* 50 (2016): 1–10.
29. Blessing Onoriode Boloje, "Returning to Yahweh and Yahweh's Return: Aspects of שׁוּב in the Book of Malachi," *Old Testament Essays* 33 (2020): 143–61; Blessing Onoriode Boloje, "Malachi's Use of תּוֹרָה in Dialogue with the Wisdom Tradition of Proverbs," *Old Testament Essays* 31 (2018): 243–63; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Antithesis between יִרְאֵי יְהוָה and רְשָׁעִים: Malachi 3:13–21 [MT] as a Reconciliation of Yahweh's Justice with Life's Inequalities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36 (2015): 1–8; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Literary Analysis of Covenant Themes in the Book of Malachi," *Old Testament Essays* 28 (2015): 257–82; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Malachi's Concept of a Torah-Compliant Community (Ml 3:22 [MT]) and Its Associated Implications," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71 (2015): 1–9; Alphonso Groenewald and Blessing Onoriode Boloje, "Prophetic Criticism of Temple Rituals: A Reflection on Malachi's Idea about Yahweh and Ethics for Faith Communities," *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa* 114 (2015): 1–18; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Malachi's Vision of the Temple: An Emblem of Eschatological Hope (Malachi 3:1-5) and an Economic Centre of the Community (Malachi 3:10-12)," *Journal for Semitics* 23 (2014): 354–81; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Perspectives on Priests' Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6-2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence," *Journal for Semitics* 22 (2013): 376–408.
30. James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2011).
31. Coggins and Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*.
32. David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).
33. Stuart asserts and defends that Malachi knew and used the Torah, especially the book of Deuteronomy. See, Stuart, "Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 1257.

inherently subjective and any results must remain hypothetical. There is simply no external evidence of earlier stages of the books of Haggai, Zechariah, or Malachi circulating in any other form."[34] The same could be said of most other historical-critical studies in other books of the Hebrew Bible. Karl William Weyde does not attempt to offer a commentary but does cover the whole text from the perspective of how Malachi uses sources.[35]

Sometimes the distinction between synchronic and diachronic methods is lost, due to misappropriation of labels. An interesting case is Paul L. Redditt. In a section entitled "Literary Analysis of the Book of Malachi," he ignores the text as it stands and proceeds to rearrange the text, based on seemingly arbitrary criteria to determine which texts best match each other. No evidence is given for the supposed earlier layers in the texts, other than the author's opinion of what constitutes a proper flow for an argument.[36] An example of an apparent blend between diachronic and synchronic approaches is a very recent study by Julian V. Bacon. He deals with text development in Malachi 1:2-5, but does so from the final form of the text.[37]

In the last few decades discourse analysis has established itself as a valid and useful tool for exploring the Hebrew Scriptures as a finished text, as opposed to textual layers or remnants of oral communication.[38] This method has been applied to Malachi by Ernst R. Wendland, who argues passionately for the artistry, organization, and rhetorical prowess of the book.[39] Niccacci's syntactical analysis of Malachi is also noteworthy. He does not discuss in detail the macro structure of the text, but he does analyze the text closely and, therefore, offers refreshingly nuanced translations.[40] Although not agreeing with all his choices, I applaud the close attention to the syntax in the text. Other studies worth mentioning are those by Gerrie Snyman, where he

34. Anthony Robert Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, Apollos Old Testament (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 36. However, there is definite evidence for different sequential arrangements of books, as demonstrated by the LXX and 4Q76 (4QXII[a]). See, Mika S. Pajunen and Hanne von Weissenberg, "The Book of Malachi, Manuscript 4Q76 (4QXIIa), and the Formation of the 'Book of the Twelve,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134 (2015): 731–51.
35. Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).
36. Paul L. Redditt, "The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994): 244–49.
37. Julian V. Bacon, "'I Loved Jacob, but Esau I Hated' Textual Relationships and Development in Malachi 1:2–5" (PhD Dissertation, Wake Forest, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021).
38. Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, 5–6.
39. Ernst R. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric: Case Studies in Text Analysis and Translation*, 2nd ed., SIL International Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics 7 (Dallas: SIL International Publications, 2014), 353–83.
40. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi."

offers a fresh perspective on an often-discussed passage,[41] and the contribution by E. Ray Clendenen, who approaches the text from the perspective of emotions.[42] As for the methodology to be used in this work, there are no studies on Malachi from a reader-oriented approach focused on the TIR.[43]

The use of blessing and cursing in Malachi has been previously noted. Opinions range from those who see it as a side feature in the text, to those who see a blessing or a curse behind virtually every verse in the book.[44] Such range of opinions warrants a fresh look into the issue. This study seeks to do that by even-handedly analyzing the use of blessing and cursing in Malachi on the levels of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Methodology

There are numerous synchronic approaches to explore biblical texts. Nonetheless, at its core blessing and cursing are about communication and the impact of that communication. It is for this reason that a reader-oriented approach is used here to explore the text-internal communication in the book of Malachi and the impact of blessing and cursing on the characters and the TIR.

There is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation between the world of a text and the outside world, the real world.[45] The text presents a reality that may or may not align with reality in the real world, but it is a reality that needs to be analyzed and understood within its own world. When the distinction between the world of the text and the real world is not acknowledged, many questions but few answers come to light, since those questions are irrelevant in the world of the text, the only world to which we have full access in the case of biblical texts.

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41. Gerrie F. Snyman, "A Hermeneutic of Vulnerability: Edom in Malachi 1:2-5," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 595–629.
42. E. Ray Clendenen, "A Passionate Prophet: Reading Emotions in the Book of Malachi," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23 (2013): 207–21.
43. Clendenen does hold to the notion of an "ideal reader" or an "ideal audience" as an important interpretative element to consider, in order to expound prophetic texts, but he does not fully expand on what he means by those terms. See, Clendenen, "Textlinguistics and Prophecy in the Book of the Twelve."
44. For an overview of opinions regarding the presence of blessing and cursing in Malachi see Andy R. Espinoza, "Malachi's Blessings and Curses in Relation to the Covenantal Blessings and Curses of Deuteronomy 27-30" (Silang, Cavite, Philippines, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2004), 3–7; Stuart, "Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 1261–62.
45. A text is understood as "any form of expression in which a message is communicated from a sender-entity to a receiver-entity." Frank G. Bosman and Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *Video Games as Art: A Communication-Oriented Perspective on the Relationship between Gaming and the Art*, vol. 12, Video Games and the Humanities (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 12.

The realization of the distinction between the world of the author and the world of the text has meant that historically the methodologies applied in biblical exegesis have successively focused on the historical author, then the text, and lastly on the reader.[46] The basic methodology to be applied in this study will be that of discourse analysis with special focus on the communication between the TIA and the TIR.[47] Analysis of rhetorical aspects, as well as issues of innertextuality and intertextuality, will also be employed as aids to discourse analysis. This means that semantic and thematic relations between texts are embedded in the textual communication structures.

The method of discourse analysis, as applied here, follows the line of Harald Weinrich, Wolfgang Schneider, and Eep Talstra, as practiced at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.[48] It involves a three-step approach to the text: a syntactic analysis exposing the structure of the text, a semantic analysis exploring the semantic themes in the text, and a communication analysis exploring how the TIA manipulates the text to impact and possibly involve the TIR.[49]

Clearly distinguishing between syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects leads to a more scientific approach to the text.[50] Similarly, approaching these steps sequentially

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46. For a discussion of the evolution of methodologies for Biblical exegesis, see Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," *Наукові Записки УКУ: Богослов'я* 7 (2020): 27–46.
47. The method of discourse analysis, together with text-linguistics, has been considered as an application of pragmatic analyses. Marco di Giulio, "Pragmatics: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
48. As did R. E. Longacre, I became familiar with the work of Wolfgang Schneider through the work of Eep Talstra. I later learned that Schneider based much of his work on that of Harald Weinrich. See, Robert Edmondson Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 177; Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. Randall L. McKinion, Studies in Biblical Hebrew 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 2016); Harald Weinrich, *Tempus: Besprochene und Erzählte Welt*, Sprache und Literatur 16 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964).This kind of discourse analysis is also identified as text-linguistics, involving the steps of text-syntax, text-semantics, and text-pragmatics. See, Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 7. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Notes on Isaiah 38-39," *Biblische Notizen* 102 (2000): 28–32. A similar methodology is that of semiotics, involving the steps of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Baker Academic, 2005), s.v. Semiotics.
49. For examples of such a studies, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Isaiah 24:21-25:12: A Communicative Analysis: Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27* (Atlanta, 2013), 77–97. Bincy Thumpanathu, "Communication and the Role of the Lord in Amos: Their Development and Their Implications for the Text-Immanent Reader" (Doctoral Thesis, Utrecht, Eburon, 2019). Pratheesh Michael Pulickal, *Exploring Kenosis Spirituality: The Implications for the CMI's Spiritual Formation: A Communication-Oriented Analysis* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2022). For a similar approach involving a text-linguistic analysis, a subjective domain analysis, and communication analysis, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
50. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, "Some Recent Trends in Biblical Hebrew Linguistics: A Few Pointers Towards a More Comprehensive Model of Language Use," *Hebrew Studies* 44 (2003): 14.

allows for better use of insights. In a synchronic analysis, syntactical observations have priority over semantic ones, which in turn have priority over pragmatic ones.[51] This does not mean that semantic or pragmatic observations are invalid. Rather, different observations should proceed in a particular order to provide the best results.

Syntax provides the general framework in which semantic elements can be analyzed.[52] Syntactic and semantic analyses are useful to bring out meaningful exegetical information, as well as to inform about the constituent parts of texts and how they function together.[53] After these two previous steps are accomplished, we can access the communicative effect of text-pragmatics.[54] All these methods are text-bound and do not pretend to discover supposed historical situations or psychological motivations on the part of the real author(s) or reader(s).[55]

Syntactical Analysis

Texts are composed of morphemes, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs.[56] In consequence, discourse analysis assumes that texts are not linear sequences of clauses but are hierarchical in nature.[57] In the syntactical analysis, I examined the text to see how clauses relate to each other hierarchically to reveal the structure of the text. These relationships are then used to interpret grammatical features, considering the textual level in which they appear.[58] The proper identification of clauses and the relationship between them is important as this will determine the identification of textual units and the relationship between those units. This in turn will affect the outcome of exegesis.[59]

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51. Eep Talstra, "Deuteronomy 8 and 9 Synchronic and Diachronic Observations," in *Synchronic or Diachronic: A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* [Papers Read at the Ninth Joint Meeting of Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap En Nederland En België and the Society for Old Testament Study, Held at Kampen, 1994], ed. Johannes Cornelis de Moor, Oudtestamentische Studiën 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 193.
52. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 2. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Psalm 122: Syntax and the Position of the I-Figure and the Text-Immanent Reader: Composition of the Book of Psalms," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (Leuven, 2010), 748.
53. See for example, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The 'I'-Figure's Relations in the Poem in Isa 38,10-20," *Biblica* 96 (2015): 481–97.
54. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 7; Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 169; Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible II: Syntax and Semantics," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39 (1982): 35.
55. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," *Estudios Bíblicos* 53 (1995): 290.
56. Eep Talstra, "Text Linguistics: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
57. Robert D. Bergen, "Discourse Analysis: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
58. Talstra, "Text Linguistics: Biblical Hebrew."
59. S. D. Snyman, "Rethinking the Demarcation of Malachi 2:17-3:5," *Acta Theologica* 31 (2011): 156.

The first step in the syntactical analysis is to divide the Hebrew text into clauses. In the hierarchical model followed here, morphemes form phrases, phrases form clauses, clauses form sentences, sentences form paragraphs, and paragraphs form the text. A clause is formed by a series of words having a subject, implicit or explicit, and a predicate.[60] For the purposes of this research, I consider a clause any textual structure that has a predicate.[61] Also, for practical reasons, I consider vocatives as clauses, so it is clear who is addressed where in the text, and I focus on clauses and paragraphs in the syntactical analysis.

The second step in the process is to connect clauses using a binary system of text hierarchy.[62] This hook system is used to indicate the relation between clauses. A single line is used to indicate default or unmarked narrative or discursive texts. Double lines are used to indicate the presence of a speech.[63] No more than two clauses are connected to each other in this system.[64] This binary system forces the researcher to carefully consider markers inside the clauses themselves in order to discern how to hierarchically connect them.[65]

The third step is to identify textual units and the hierarchical connections between those units. This is accomplished by noting syntactical, morphological, and lexical elements.[66] Paying attention to these signs results in a text hierarchy that guides the implied reader through the text.[67] Syntactical and morphological elements include discourse markers or macro syntactical markers, asyndetic clauses, disjunctive particles, conjunctive particles, interrogative particles, introductory formulas, emphatic particles, emphatic constructions, inclusions, changes in person, number and gender—possibly signaling a change in speaker or addressee, pronominalization, renominalization, etc.[68] Macro syntactical signs usually mark the connection between larger units and are thus used to discern the structure of the text.[69] Lexical elements

60. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), sec. 12.1.
61. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 8.
62. Van Wieringen, 10.
63. Speeches can be direct or indirect. Furthermore, speeches can be embedded inside other speeches. Cf. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Isaiah 12,1-6: A Domain and Communication Analysis," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, 1997, 150.
64. Van Wieringen, 9–12.
65. See the appendix for my clause division and working translation of the text of Malachi.
66. Talstra, "Deuteronomy 8 and 9 Synchronic and Diachronic Observations," 194.
67. Eep Talstra and E. J. van Wolde, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20 and 24," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible. Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996* (Brill, 1997), 5.
68. See, Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 173. See also Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.1.4.
69. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 9.

include lexical repetitions, use of synonyms, antonyms, isotopes, etc. Syntactical elements, especially macro syntactical elements should be given priority over semantic ones.[70]

Other syntactic and morphological signs pertain to changes in word order and the use of verbal forms. Languages combine words, functioning as subject, verb, objects, and adjuncts, to convey meaning. Authors signal their message and the internal structure of their message through the words they intentionally choose and the way they arrange those words.[71] Furthermore, languages have usual or unmarked patterns which are pragmatically neutral,[72] and when speakers deviate from those patterns they do so for particular reasons,[73] usually to signal a change in topic or focus.[74] It is only reasonable to assume that in biblical Hebrew, as is the case in other languages, when a writer chose to use a particular verbal form, or a combination of verbal forms, he intended to signal particular temporal and aspectual elements.[75]

This issue of verbal forms is an important element I used in the syntactic analysis of Malachi. This pertains to an approach to the biblical Hebrew verbal system including the elements of orientation, relief, and perspective, as proposed by Schneider and refined by Talstra and others.[76] This approach was used to produce the working translation and, more importantly for this section, these elements also influenced the way clauses were connected to each other resulting in a hierarchy of textual units. Noting the use of verbal forms also reveals the structure of the text.[77]

Different verbal forms or combinations of verbal forms are considered to be used to express the three main oppositions of the biblical Hebrew verbal system: orientation

70. Cf. Eep Talstra, "Clause Types and Textual Structure: An Experiment in Narrative Syntax," in *Narrative and Comment: Contributions to Discourse Grammar and Biblical Hebrew Presented to Wolfgang Schneider on the Occasion of His Retirement as a Lecturer of Biblical Hebrew at the Theologische Hochschule in Wuppertal*, ed. Eep Talstra (Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1995), 170–71.
71. Gerda de Villiers, "Interpreting Texts and the Matter of Context: Examples from the Book of Ruth," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40 (2019): 2.
72. In Biblical Hebrew, the unmarked word order is considered to be verb + subject + object and any modifiers. Constructions with an element preceding the verb are usually considered marked. See, Adina Moshavi, "Word Order: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan, Shmuel Bolozky, Steven Fassberg, Gary A. Rendsburg, Aaron D. Rubin, Ora R. Schwarzwald, and Tamar Zewi (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
73. MacDonald, "Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation," 17.
74. See, Christo H. J. van der Merwe and Ernst R. Wendland, "Marked Word Order in the Book of Joel," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 36 (January 2010): 109–30.
75. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 59.
76. See, Eep Talstra, "Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Walter Schneider," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5 (1992): 269–97.
77. Van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," 291–96.

or communication type, indicating whether a text is narrative or discourse; relief, indicating whether a verbal form is part of the foreground or the background of the text; and perspective, indicating whether the action is to be located before, during, or after the now moment in the text.[78]

The *wayyiqtol* is the characteristic form of narrative texts, while the *yiqtol* and *q^{e}tol* are the characteristic forms of discursive texts.[79] These verbal forms can also be used to signal a change in the speakers' orientation. A *yiqtol* can be used to insert a brief speech in a narrative text, and a *wayyiqtol* can be used to insert a brief narration in a discursive text.[80]

Wayyiqtols are also used to indicate the foreground actions in narrative texts, while *yiqtols* and *q^{e}tols* indicate the foreground actions in discursive texts.[81] Typically, both in narrative and discursive texts, *qatal* forms provide background information and have a negative or past perspective. *Qatals* can also on occasion have zero perspective, and thus convey the idea of a now moment in the text. *w^{e}qatals* typically convey a positive or future perspective.[82] In general, non-verbal clauses belong to the now moment in the text.[83]

This approach to biblical Hebrew verbal system is not universally accepted, however. For some scholars the morphology of Hebrew verbs simply has nothing to do with signaling information such as foreground or background.[84] Other scholars do take verbal forms to signal such elements, but interpret them in a different way. R. E. Longacre follows the same basic line as Schneider and Talstra in the analysis of verbal forms according to the discourse type and exploring the function of those verbal forms in each discourse type. But he identifies several more text types beyond narration and discursion. He proposes texts such as narrative, predictive, procedural/ instructional, hortatory, expository, and judicial discourse.[85] Similarly, David Allan Dawson advocates for different text types, each with its own prevalent mainline verbal forms.

78. Talstra and Wolde, "Workshop: Clause Types, Textual Hierarchy, Translation in Exodus 19, 20 and 24," 8. See also, Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 2–11.
79. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory," 170–72.
80. Talstra, "Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Walter Schneider," 280–81.
81. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 6.
82. For a more detailed discussion, see, Van Wieringen, 2–7. For a practical example of how these kind of syntactical observations are applied to make exegetical choices, see, Van Wieringen, "Psalm 122."
83. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 55.
84. Elizabeth Robar, "Grounding: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
85. See, Longacre, "Discourse Perspective on the Hebrew Verb: Affirmation and Restatement."

Texts are labelled as narrative, predictive, hortatory, and expository.[86] Niccacci takes a slightly different route. For him, several verbal forms relating to the past, present, and future, can signify the foreground in texts. Furthermore, some forms could either mark the foreground or background.[87] The ambiguities in his model seem to shift the analysis from syntax to semantics. Despite the criticisms to this approach to the biblical Hebrew verbal system based on orientation, relief, and perspective, it has proven useful in the analysis of biblical texts. This study seeks to continue exploring the usefulness of the approach.

The result of combining clauses considering the syntactic, morphemic, and semantic information they contain is that the underlaying syntactical structure of the text was revealed. The data collected served to identify the start and end of textual units, identify direct and embedded speeches in units, and finally to identify the relationship between units. The division of the text into clauses and the hierarchical connection of clauses is my own work. Computer databases that attempt to accomplish a similar goal have been and continue to be developed.[88]

Semantic Analysis

The field of semantics deals with elements of history, anthropology, cognitive studies, linguistics, and literary studies in its search to understand how words are used to convey meaning.[89] In the present semantic analysis, I identify semantic techniques in the text, then determine what semantic lines or themes are expressed though those semantic techniques, and finally, analyze how semantic lines relate to each other. Special note is made of how the theme of blessing and cursing brings coherence to the text.

The exploration of semantics in the text of Malachi revealed the use of several techniques. These are listed below, ranked from those deemed more objective and therefore more readily identifiable, to those deemed more subjective and therefore harder to perceive. I assume that the more objective techniques are more useful, since

86. See, David Allan. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 115–16. Note specially chapter 3 where the author attempts to propose a cohesive method for textual analysis.
87. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 58.
88. Cf. Eep Talstra, "Computer-Assisted Linguistic Analysis the Hebrew Database Used in Quest.2," *Bible and Computer*, 2002, 3–22; A. J. C. Verheij and Eep Talstra, "Crunching Participles: An Aspect of Computer Assisted Syntactical Analysis Demonstrated on Isaiah 1-12," in *A Prophet on the Screen: Computerized Description and Literary Interpretation of Isaianic Texts*, ed. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Eep Talstra (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992).
89. Ingrid Faro, "Semantics," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016).

they are more discernible, than more subjective ones to determine the semantic thrust of the book.[90]

- Word and root repetition.[91]
- Use of synonyms.[92]
- Word pairs.[93]
- Isotopic relations.[94]
- Antithetic relations.[95]
- Chiasmus.[96]
- Semantic domains.[97]
- Analogies.[98]
- Code switching.[99]

The use of semantic techniques serves to reveal the semantic lines or themes that are important to the TIA.[100] I consider as a semantic line only those issues that appear in

90. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 40. E. Ray Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10:1-6," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 402–5.
91. A distinction was made between the repeated use of the same word and the same root. Especially noteworthy was the repeated use of a term in a similar syntactic context.
92. Actual synonyms were noted as well as words that initially do not appear synonyms but are revealed as such because of parallel syntactical structures. But note that parallel texts are not automatically to be regarded as synonyms. Different words are used because different nuances are intended. S. J. Paul Mankowski, "Synonym: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," 210.
93. These are fixed combinations of two or three words that are usually found together in the Hebrew Scriptures and other Hebrew texts. A especially useful tool in identifying such words is the work by Avishur. Yitzhak Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament 210 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1984).
94. These are words that are not synonyms, but part of their meaning is the same since they are connected at the conceptual level.
95. This would denote words with opposite meanings, i.e., antonyms, as well as contrast.
96. When a chiasmus has an uneven number of elements, the central part is prominent. When the number is even, the outer elements are prominent. Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10," 404.
97. Also called word fields. A collection of words belonging to the same theme.
98. These are intra-biblical references. A distinction is made between direct quotations and allusions. Especially noteworthy are uses in a similar syntactic context. The word analogy is preferred since it does not presuppose a historical relation between texts.
99. This involves a change in language. It is frequent in appeals, arguments, and discussions, when the speaker is trying to persuade. Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10," 405.
100. For a semantic study that traces the use and meaning of an element spanning several Bible books, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Theologoumenon 'New': Bridging the Old and the New Testament," in *The Scriptures of Israel in Jewish and Christian Tradition: Essays in Honour of Maarten J. J. Menken*, ed. Bart Koet, Steve Moyise, and Joseph Verheyden (Brill, 2013), 285–301. For a semantic study of the termשׁוּב in Malachi and the Twelve, see, Boloje, "Returning to Yahweh and Yahweh's Return: Aspects of שׁוּב in the Book of Malachi."

more than one textual block. Semantic issues are to be studied within the framework or textual hierarchy as revealed by the syntactic analysis.

The way semantic lines are used through the text serves to indicate their relative importance. Some lines appear in a few textual blocks and thus only support more substantive lines. Those lines that appear in several blocks can be safely assumed to represent the semantic thrust of the book.

Communication Analysis

In the same way that there is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation between the world of a text and the real world, there a distinction between text-immanent communication, the communication inside a text, and text-external communication, the communication between real author(s) and real reader(s) in the real world.[101]

The last step of the method applied in this research deals with the analysis of the pragmatic effects of syntax and semantics on the text-immanent communication, especially noting how blessing and cursing are used to impact it. The distinction between semantics and pragmatics is somewhat difficult to make as both disciplines seek to ascertain meaning. In this respect, it might be helpful to consider semantics as the study of meaning in an unmarked context while pragmatics is the study of meaning in a particular context.[102] In this case, the context is the communicational effect to the reader in the text.

The communicational analysis used here falls within reader response criticism, more specifically, text-immanent reader response criticism.[103] Reader-oriented exegesis focusses on the communication in the text between the TIA and the TIR. This communication is separate from that between the real author and a real reader.[104] Unlike a real reader who can take the text any direction he wants, the TIR takes the text as the TIA designs it.[105]

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101. Bosman and Van Wieringen, *Video Games as Art: A Communication-Oriented Perspective on the Relationship between Gaming and the Art*, 12:12.
102. Douglas Mangum and Josh Westbury, *Linguistics & Biblical Exegesis* (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2017), 58.
103. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 37.
104. Methodologies of biblical exegesis have moved in focus from the historical author, to diachronic analysis of texts, to real readers, and finally to the reader within the text. See, Van Wieringen, 40–42.
105. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Sirach 48:17-25 and the Isaiah-Book: Hezekiah and Isaiah in the Book of Sirach and the Reader-Oriented Perspective of the Isaiah-Book," in *Rewriting Biblical History Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Harm van Grol, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 7 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 192. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Triple-Layered Communication in the Book of Amos and Its Message of Non-Appropriation Theology," in *Multiple Teachers in Biblical Texts*, ed. Bart Koet and Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, Biblical Exegesis & Theology 88 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2017), 90.

Thus, the focus of the pragmatic analysis is not real readers but the communication between characters, and ultimately the communication between the TIA and TIR.[106]

Before discussing the textual constructs TIA and TIR and the communication between them, we must address the foundational concepts of Implied Author (IA) and Implied Reader (IR). Scholars hold many opinions about the concept of the IA, nonetheless there is basic agreement that it indicates an author figure inside the text which is distinct from the real author.[107] This author figure is the image evoked by the stylistic, ideological, and aesthetic elements present in the text.[108]

The concept of the IR was first developed in the Russian formalism of the 1920s but the first formulations of the concept in the west appeared in the 1960s.[109] The IR has been described as the author's image of the recipient of the text as expressed in the text.[110] This IR functions as the ideal recipient of a work.[111] He responds as the IA wants him to respond.[112] Terms such as mock reader, virtual reader, ideal reader, super reader, text internal reader, text immanent reader, and model reader have been used to designate the receiving end of the communication pole. This receiving entity has been understood to exist inside the text, outside the text, or both inside and outside of the text simultaneously.[113] Theory allows for the existence of multiple implied authors and readers in a text. Since I do not perceive any features signaling different authorial or recipient identities in the text, I take the text of Malachi as having one IA and one IR.[114]

The study of a text's IA and IR has been criticized by many and from many angles.[115] The particular characteristics of such textual constructs are also a subject of debate. There is debate whether these entities are created by real authors or exist independent from them, whether they can be reconstructed using only textual data or if extra

106. Van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," 299–300.
107. Grzegorz Maziarczyk, "The Author's Second Self or a Set of Implicit Norms: The Concept of the Implied Author and Its Discontents," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 65 (2018): 137.
108. Schmid Wolf, "Implied Author," in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (Hamburg: Hamburg University, 2014), para. 1.
109. Wolf, paras. 5, 10.
110. Schmid Wolf, "Implied Reader," in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn and et al (Hamburg: Hamburg University, 2014), para. 1.
111. Wolf, paras. 5, 7.
112. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Psalm 65 as Non-Appropriation Theology," *Biblica* 95 (2014): 185–86.
113. For a succinct list of authors, terms, and definitions, see Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 38.
114. For an interesting and illuminating discussion of texts with multiple implied readers, see, Brian Richardson, "Singular Text, Multiple Implied Readers," *Style* 41 (2007): 259–74. Perhaps others would explain some peculiarities of the Malachi text by positing several implied authors and readers. I can imagine such a case especially among authors who speculate about authorial or redactional layers.
115. Wolf, "Implied Author," para. 13.

textual data is needed, whether they are personified or abstract entities, whether they can address other entities, whether they are extrinsic or immanent to the textual communication, and to what extent they are redundant or useful for textual analysis.[116] Despite the criticism and theoretical discussion, the concept of IA and IR continues to be used as a tool to understand texts, since no better term has been found to express the authorial and recipient elements within texts.[117] Furthermore, when the author of a text is known, to try to ascertain the characteristics of the IA may seem futile or irrelevant. But with biblical texts this work is indispensable. Many biblical texts are anonymous and even for those texts whose author is known, very little is actually known about the historical circumstances of such authors.[118]

Carrying out a communicational analysis focusing on the IR in conjunction to a synchronic approach to the text means that the IR in Malachi has access to the whole text of the Hebrew Scriptures. If diachronic perspectives were in place, this would change what the IR in Malachi would have access to in terms of the Hebrew Scriptures. Having access to the rest of the Scriptures does not mean that the IR in Malachi is the same as that in other books or that in the Hebrew Bible as a whole. Each text has its own IR and needs to be approached with this realization in mind. But having access to the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures does mean that the IR has access to much more information than the characters in the text.[119] In Malachi, the IR has knowledge of the Torah and other sections of the Hebrew cannon.[120]

The preceding considerations derive on a three-layered model of communication that involves a real author (RA) and reader (RR) outside of the text, an implied author (IA) and reader (IR) in the text, and characters (Ca ↔ Cb) in the text.[121] The real author creates a text to communicate with the real reader. The real reader receives the meaning of the text, but also adds his own meaning to it, since he has the freedom to accept or reject the ideas of the real author.[122] The implied author manipulates the

116. Maziarczyk provides an illuminating discussion. See, Maziarczyk, "The Author's Second Self or a Set of Implicit Norms," 145.
117. Wolf, "Implied Author," paras. 15–16.
118. See for example, Marie-Laure Ryan, "Meaning, Intent, and the Implied Author," *Style* 45 (2011): 29–47.
119. As in the narrative of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. See, Van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1-19: Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics," 302. Or as in the narrative on Ahab and Elijah in 1 Kings 17. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Literary Function of the Joshua-Reference in 1 Kings 16:34," in *The Book of Joshua*, ed. E. Noort, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2012), 505.
120. Cf. Ched Spellman and his discussion of the ideal reader of the Cristian cannon as one who has access to the whole of it and devotes himself to its continual reading. Ched Spellman, "The Scribe Who Has Become a Disciple: Identifying and Becoming the Ideal Reader of the Biblical Canon," *Themelios* 41 (2016): 16.
121. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 25. Van Wieringen, "Isaiah 12,1-6," 24–26.
122. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 5.

characters in the text to convey meaning to the implied reader and occasionally communicates directly to him. The implied reader receives the meaning just as the implied author designs it. The characters communicate with each other. The graphic below represents these dynamics:

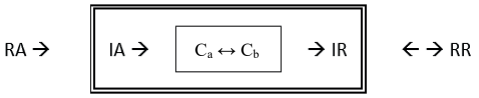

Figure 1 – Triple layered communication

The text-bound sending and receiving entities in this model can and have been further refined to distinguish two related but distinct elements. On the one hand there are authorial and destinatary entities in the text. These continue to be termed as IA and IR. But there are also more active entities in the text who address and are addressed by others. These are termed Text-Internal Author (TIA) and Text-Internal Reader (TIR) and function as narrator or discourser and narratee or discourse depending on the text type.[123]

Albeit theoretical, the distinction between IA and TIA and between IR and TIR is useful. These refinements facilitate a more exact description and discussion of the communicational elements in the text. The IA and the IR provide a link between the real world and the world of the text through possibility conditions.[124] They are textual entities, but the language used to code and decode the message, the culture, geography, history, and other elements portrayed in the text serve to link them to the real world.[125] Furthermore, although the IA is the originator of all communication in the text since

123. Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 151. Maziarczyk, "The Author's Second Self or a Set of Implicit Norms," 142. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 41. See also, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Isaiah's Roles: The Unity of a Bible Book from the Perspective of the Sender-Role," in *One Text, a Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjef van Tilborg*, ed. Ulrich Berges (Brill, 2005), 117.
124. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 42. For a discussion involving possibility conditions, see, Van Wieringen, "A Tale of Two Worlds? A Synchronic Reading of Isaiah 7:1–17 and Its Diachronic Consequences for the Book," 190.
125. Bosman and Van Wieringen, *Video Games as Art: A Communication-Oriented Perspective on the Relationship between Gaming and the Art*, 12:15. For example, a text where the IA presents a character using a cellphone to chat with another character denotes possibility conditions that would point to a particular historical era and not to any time before cellphones began to exist. This would connect the world of the text to the real world. Similarly, a text about the attack to the Twin Towers written in American English would demand an IA who is American, or is familiar with American culture, who lived after September 11, 2011. The IR would be a native English speaker. The actual characteristics of the real author and real reader of such a text could be quite different.

he is what gives rise to the narrator or discourser, characters, and all the elements of the text,[126] he cannot address the IR directly.[127] Similarly, although the IR is the ultimate object of everything in the text,[128] he cannot be addressed directly.[129] These communicative roles fall on the TIA towards the TIR. The TIA functioning as narrator or discourser at the sending pole and the TIR functioning as narratee or discoursee at the receiving pole also belong to the world of the implied author and implied reader, respectively.[130] They do not belong to the level of the characters, but to the level of the IA and the IR.

The communication analysis is therefore carried out considering the two poles and two levels that are involved in any communication. On the sending pole we have the IA, and the TIA functioning as narrator or discourser, and on the receiving pole we have the IR, and the TIR functioning as narratee or discoursee. The two levels correspond to communication that happens between characters, termed as low-level, and communication that happens between the IA and the IR, termed as high-level. This happens through the TIA and the TIR. All communication in the text involves the IA and the IR, but the only way for the IA to address the IR is via the TIA and TIR.[131]

These additional insights into the sending pole of the IA and the receiving pole of the IR and the communicational level of the IA and IR as opposed to that of the characters results in a four-layered model of communication.[132] The graphic below represents these dynamics:

126. Wolf, "Implied Author," para. 19.
127. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 4.
128. Van Wieringen, "Isaiah's Roles: The Unity of a Bible Book from the Perspective of the Sender-Role."
129. Wolf, "Implied Reader," para. 11.
130. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 4–6; Franciscus Gerardus Bosman and Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Reading The Book of Joseph: A Communication-Oriented Analysis of Far Cry 5," *Journal for Religion, Film and Media* 7 (2021): 145–71.
131. See, Van Wieringen, "Sirach 48:17-25 and the Isaiah-Book: Hezekiah and Isaiah in the Book of Sirach and the Reader-Oriented Perspective of the Isaiah-Book," 192.
132. Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 3–5. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 41. Van Wieringen and Koet mention three layers in the communication because they exclude the real author and reader in their analysis. Van Wieringen, "The Triple-Layered Communication in the Book of Amos and Its Message of Non-Appropriation Theology," 90–91.

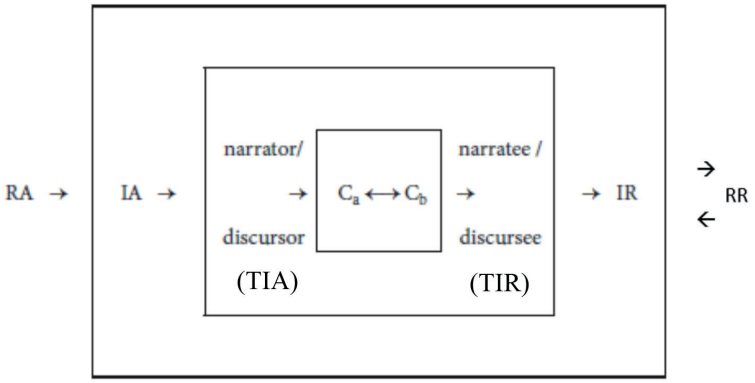

Figure 2 – Quadruple layered communication

The following labels serve to aid in understanding the graphic above and summarize the discussion.

RA – Real Author: Historical entity outside of the text.

IA – Implied Author: How the real author presents himself in the text through possibility conditions. Originator of the communication but cannot directly address any textual entity.

TIA – Text-Internal Author: Serves as the narrator or discourser who actively manipulates and addresses characters and the TIR. Belongs to the pole and the level of the IA.

$C_a \leftrightarrow C_b$ – Characters: Entities that are manipulated and addressed by the TIA, address each other, and can address the TIR.

TIR – Text-Internal Reader: Serves as the narratee or discoursee who can be addressed by characters and the TIA. Belongs to the pole and the level of the IR.

IR – Implied Reader: Author's ideal reader as expressed through possibility conditions. Destinatary of all communication but cannot be addressed directly by any textual entity.

RR – Real Reader: Historical entity outside of the text.

It must be remembered that all textual entities described in the communication analysis, whether belonging to the implied author, the characters, or the implied reader, are textual constructs, textual entities. These are not real people with feelings and emotions. When in the course of the analysis it is said that an entity is shocked or surprised, or some other term that denotes human emotions, these are just anthropomorphic expressions used to aid in description and understanding. Textual entities have no emotions and make no choices. They act in the way it has been designed by the implied author.

The preceding discussion has made it evident that a communicational analysis could include four levels in total: real author to real reader, implied author to implied reader, text-internal author to text-internal reader, and characters to each other. But given that the real author and real reader are outside of the biblical text, are historically

inaccessible without resorting to the speculations of diachronic approaches, and the real reader can take a text in any way he chooses, these are not considered in the present analysis. Similarly, since the distinction between IA and TIA and between IR and TIR is mostly theoretical, and since the IA cannot communicate directly to the IR but relies on the TIA and the TIR, the focus will be on the latter. In this work the discussion will therefore focus on two levels, the level of the TIA and the TIR, which belong to the level of the IA and IR respectively, and the level of the characters ($C_a \leftrightarrow C_b$). The graphic below represents these dynamics:

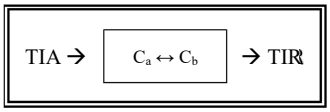

Figure 3 – Double layered communication

The communicational analysis is therefore carried out in two movements, focusing consecutively on the level of the characters, the low-level communication, and then on the level of the TIA and the TIR, the high-level communication. When it is necessary to explicitly distinguish between entities inside the high-level communication, I use the labels IA and IR in contrast to TIA and TIR. Otherwise, the labels TIA and TIR are used throughout.

The focus of the analysis on the level of the characters is to describe how the TIA manipulates the characters. To do this, first, the characters, their actions, and the results of those actions were identified. Second, it was determined who was the speaker and addressee in each textual unit. Third, direct and indirect, or embedded, speeches were also identified.[133] Finally, the location of the speaker and the time of the speech in relation to the now moment of the text were also identified.

The focus of the analysis on the level of the TIA and the TIR is to describe how the TIA manipulates the TIR and seeks to involve him in the text. I described four basic reader-oriented strategies applied by the TIA.[134]

133. Speeches can be labeled as direct or indirect. Direct speech represents what was originally expressed. Indirect speech represents the report of what someone had said. Direct speeches are syntactically independent from their frame or surrounding text. Indirect speeches are characterized by transparent pronominal reference, i.e., there is syntactical dependence or coordination with elements in the frame or surrounding text. Furthermore, the information in the quotation is given from the perspective of the quoting speaker. Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, 156, 161–64.
134. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Assur and Babel against Jerusalem: The Reader-Oriented Position of Babel and Assur within the Framework of Isaiah 1-39," in *"Enlarge the Site of Your Tent": The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah*, ed. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Annemarieke van der Woude, vol. 58, Old Testament Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 50.

First, have the TIR as a narrative observer or as a discursive witness. Sometimes the TIA and TIR are clearly identified in the text but at other times they are not. Nonetheless, everything in the text is addressed to the TIR and is designed to impact him. For example, the TIA could employ a prolepsis and reveal future information at the beginning of the text. This would have the TIR in view.

Second, include or exclude the TIR in the communication using a variety of techniques. To mention a few, a first common plural could be used inclusive or exclusively and thus grant/deny the TIR deeper access to the communication in the text.[135] A second plural could also be used to draw the TIR into the communication. Collective characters, impersonal pronouns, and inclusive concepts, such as people, or everyone, would accomplish the same effect.[136] Furthermore, when the addressee is not identified, the TIR has special access to the communication.[137] Rhetorical questions could also be used to involve the TIR.[138] Speeches presented in the now moment of the text also grant access to the TIR.

Third, to directly address the TIR. This could be accomplished by the TIA while on the role of a narrator or discourser, by placing himself on stage as one of the characters, or through one of the characters.

Fourth, to engage the TIR beyond the text by involving him in implementing or realizing unresolved issues in the text. Real readers can take texts and apply them to past, present, or future realities. In the case of applications to the future, the meaning of the text does not emerge from the text but from the future situation.[139] But there are instances where issues remain unresolved in the text. Here, the TIA of the text would place a demand on the TIR to seek realization beyond the text. For example, a conclusion or a lack of it can be an invitation for the TIR to perform an action beyond the boundaries of the text.

The sequential analysis of texts from syntactic, semantic, and communicative perspectives should allow for a balanced and productive exploration. The sequential study should also prevent unwarranted presuppositions and speculations from

135. Van Wieringen, "Psalm 65 as Non-Appropriation Theology," 186–87.
136. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 41.
137. Van Wieringen, "Psalm 122," 753. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Prophecies Against the Nations in Amos 1:2-3:15," *Estudios Bíblicos* 71 (2013): 7–19, here 19.
138. Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, Second Edition, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 341; Van Wieringen, "The Literary Function of the Joshua-Reference in 1 Kings 16:34," 503.
139. Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 266.

affecting the analysis. This is not to say that the method is completely free from biases, as no method, and for that matter no researcher is. In fact, this method is heavily biased towards the text, which in regard to biblical texts is in many cases the only tangible artifact available for study.

Synopsis

This work is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, the present chapter, deals with introductory matters including the purpose of the research, previous research, and methodology. Chapter 2 describes the syntactic analysis of the book of Malachi. Chapter 3 deals with semantic issues in the book. Chapter 4 analyses the communication in the text at the level of the characters and at the level of the TIA and the TIR. Chapter 5 uncovers the communicational implications of the TIR's use of blessing and cursing in Malachi. Lastly, chapter 6 offers conclusions and suggestions for further research.

The best way to read this study would be to always refer to my clause division and working translation as I constantly point to specific clauses in the Hebrew text, but generally do not quote them. Quoting would considerably increase the length of the research and potentially diminish its readability.

Having covered all the preliminary issues, let us get started with our reader-oriented journey through the book of Malachi, focused on blessings and curses.

Chapter 2

SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

This research seeks to describe how the TIA communicates to the TIR in Malachi, especially noting the use of blessing and cursing. As was discussed in the introduction, a multifaceted approach has proven useful when analyzing prophetic literature. Our analysis starts at the level of form, then moves to meaning, and finally to function. To accomplish this, the text is analyzed on the levels of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

This chapter consists of a syntactical analysis of the book of Malachi. To be able to syntactically describe the content and structure of the book, the following procedure was employed: first, the Hebrew text of the book was divided into clauses.[1] Second, the clauses were linked using the binary system of text hierarchy. Third, by observing the macro syntactical signs in the text, text-units were identified and the relationship between units was established. As a result of this process, the underlaying syntactical structure of the text was revealed.

For the sake of clarity and ease of comprehension, I will present first a brief discussion of how scholars have perceived the structure of Malachi. Following that, I will introduce the results of my analysis in two motions. I will first initially describe the overall structure of the book. Then, I will proceed to describe each individual text-unit.[2] By paying close attention to the syntax used in the text, this analysis will demonstrate that the book is structured in fifteen blocks and show how these blocks relate to each other. Description of thematic units is a semantic issue and is not part of the objectives of this chapter. In the final part of this chapter, I will discuss some of the implications of my research in the book of Malachi as raised by the study of its syntax and structure.

The Structure of Malachi in Scholarly Research

Some scholars claim that the book of Malachi lacks beauty and a logical structure.[3] But it is also held that the book was carefully composed, using many poetic features and a literary structure which serves to organize and highlight the main points of its message.[4]

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1. The English versions divide the text differently from the Hebrew. Verse 4:1-6 in English correspond to verses 3:19-24 in Hebrew.
2. In this study, the term "text-unit" and "unit" will be used interchangeably. The term "block" will be used to refer to a collection of units.
3. John M. Powis Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 4; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 214. It could be argued that more objective elements, such as logical structure, and more subjective ones, such as beauty, should not be lumped into one category. Separating these issues may add clarity to discussions.
4. Ernst R. Wendland, "Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi," *The Bible Translator* 36 (1985): 108–21; E. Ray Clendenen, "The Structure of Malachi: A Textlinguistic Study," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (1987): 3–17; Beth Glazier-MacDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, Dissertation Series 98 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 19.

Most scholars hold that the book of Malachi is composed of units subsequent to one another, each presenting a particular message, which also serves to introduce the next unit and to shape the message of the book as a whole. It was probably Egon Pfeiffer who first carried out a comprehensive analysis of the form of the book of Malachi and proposed that the book was composed of six disputation speeches, i.e., rhetorical exchanges formed by a statement or affirmation, a denial or counter statement, and arguments to support the original statement.[5] Following Pfeiffer's proposal, the book of Malachi has been generally divided into a superscription (1:1), six units or major divisions (1:2-5; 1:6-2:9; 2:10-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-12; 3:13-21), and a conclusion (3:22-24).[6]

This usual division of introduction, six units, plus conclusion, is such an established fact in the mind of scholars that in their works many do not discuss the structure of the text, and directly focus their attention on elaborating the relation between the different units or on expounding the text.[7]

There are however a number of scholars who categorically disagree with the now customary division for the text of Malachi.[8] Before the influential work of Pfeiffer,

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5. Egon Pfeiffer, "Die Disputationsworte Im Buche Maleachi: (Ein Beitrag Zur Formgeschichtlichen Struktur)," *Evangelische Theologie* 19 (1959): 546–68.
6. See, Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, 300; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 441–42; Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament with a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 958–59; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 299; C. Hassell. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 337; Gary V. Smith, "Malachi," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 226–27; Clendenen, "The Structure of Malachi," 17; Glazier-MacDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 19–23; Marvin E. Tate, "Questions for Priests and People in Malachi 1:2–2:16," *Review & Expositor* 84 (1987): 391; D. F. Murray, "The Rhetoric of Disputation: Re-Examination of a Prophetic Genre," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 12 (1987): 114; Walter C. Kaiser and Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Micah-Malachi*, vol. 23, Preacher's Commentary, Old Testament (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 452; James D. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 182; Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Brill, 1994), 23; Elie Assis, "Structure and Meaning in the Book of Malachi," in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 356; Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003), 332; Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 212; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 994; Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 309–11. Note that Petterson divides the unit at 3:7a.
7. A notable example is the work of Karl Weyde, who discusses extensively several introductory aspects of the book, but never directly addresses its structure. He just proceeds to divide the text in the usual way and expound it without prior explanation as to the why of the divisions. Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 57–393. For other examples or new arrangements of the traditional divisions see, Wendland, "Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi," 115.
8. See, Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, vol. 21A, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 228.

the text had been divided into two,[9] three,[10] and four sections.[11] After Pfeiffer, those who reject his division of the text usually divide the text into two or three sections.[12]

Snyman discusses the division of the text but, besides marking a division at 3:7a, settles for a structure almost identical with the traditional one. He then goes on to argue that units are parallel to each other, based on thematic issues. Using this parallel structure, he divides the book in two sections: 1:1-2:16 and 2:17-3:24.[13]

Nogalski also divides the book in two halves. He initially adopts a structure for the text almost identical to the usual one,[14] but then goes on to focus on the change in orientation from the present to the future as the Day of the Lord is introduced in 3:1. Consequently, he divides the book of Malachi into "two sections: first, Malachi 1:2–2:16 focuses on accusations against priests and the people to demonstrate the extent of the problem; and second, 2:17–4:6 shifts the focus to the future in order to explore the implications of the day of YHWH as the solution."[15]

Niccacci divides the book in two halves, then he also subdivides each half into five units, for a total of ten units. The first half (1:2-2:16) is subdivided into 1:2-5, 1:6-8, 1:9-14, 2:1-9, and 2:10-16. The second half (2:17-3:24) is subdivided into 2:17-3:7b, 3:7c-12, 3:13-18, 3:19-21, and 3:22-24. His first half is enveloped by two rhetorical questions (1:2 and 2:10). His second half is enveloped by similar announcements of entities suddenly sent by the Lord (3:1 and 3:23).[16]

A last scholar to be mentioned among those who divide the book of Malachi in two sections is Assis. He proposes that the book has two halves, having six oracles divided

9. Young used the themes of "sin and apostasy described" and "judgment and blessing predicted" to divide the text in two (Malachi 1:1-2:17, 3:1-4:6). Edward Joseph Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 285.
10. Smith also used thematic arguments to propose that the book was divided into three sections: 1:2-5, 1:6-3:12, 3:13-4:6. Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, 3.
11. Keil recognized an introduction and three units: 1:2-5, 1:6-2:9, 2:10-16, 2:17-4:6. He also used thematic reasons for dividing the text. Carl Friedrich Keil and James Martin, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), 427–28.
12. O'Brien takes a different route and holds that the book is organized following the pattern of a covenant lawsuit or ריב. Julia M. O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, Dissertation Series (Society of Biblical Literature) (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).
13. S. D. Snyman, "To Take a Second Look at Malachi the Book," *HTS Theological Studies* 71 (2015): 5. See also, Snyman, "Rethinking the Demarcation of Malachi 2."
14. Nogalski identifies the units in the text as follows: 1:2-5, 1:6-2:9, 2:10-16, 2:17-3:5, 3:6-12, 3:13-15, 3:16-18, 4:1-3. The difference with Pfeiffer's structure is that he divides the last unit (3:13-21) into three. See, Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 1007–8.
15. Nogalski, 995.
16. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 102–3; Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, vol. 22, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 561–62.

into two parts of three oracles each. His six oracles have a similar, but not identical, delimitation to the common one. He argues that the first three units are connected to each other (1:2-9; 1:10-2:9; 2:10-16) and that the remaining three units are also connected (2:17-3:6; 3:7-12; 3:13-21). Furthermore, he argues that the second and fifth units are connected. It must be observed that Assis rightly points out that the usual division of six oracles "is based on thematic distinctions only."[17] Nonetheless, his proposal for the structure of the book and the arrangement of units also seems to depend on semantic or thematic issues.

Clendenen follows a text-linguistic approach, based on the model of R. E. Longacre. He proposes that the text is hortatory and therefore ought to be structured by identifying paragraph and subparagraphs, as expressing the features of "situation," "command," and "motivation." This results in identifying three patterns of inverted repetitions or chiasms that would reveal a three-part structure in the text: 1:2-2:9, 2:10-3:6, and 3:7-24.[18] Although Clendenin's approach is identified as text-linguistic, it is rather based on semantic and thematic issues in the text. He identifies paragraphs matching a semantic label and then uses those labels to organize the text.

This short review of the structure of Malachi in scholarly research has intended to be representative and in no way exhaustive. It is clear that there is a majority view of how the book is structured: an introduction, six units, and a conclusion. Those who do not share the majority view usually divide the book into two or three sections. It must be noted, however, that even those who do not follow the majority view, still use to a greater or lesser extent the six traditional units for the internal divisions of the book. Another point to note is that, whether expressed or not, the criteria by which scholars usually divide the text into units are semantic or thematic issues.

One could hardly argue that semantic and thematic issues are not relevant to a text. Nonetheless, these are subjective issues and are therefore easy prey to manipulation and/or misrepresentation.[19] To have a book structured, based on these considerations

17. Assis, "Structure and Meaning in the Book of Malachi," 357.
18. Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 21A:229. See also, Clendenen, "The Structure of Malachi," 7.
19. When it comes to revealing the inner structure of texts, I consider semantic issues as subjective because the researcher can very well notice a root repetition or some other semantic element, but aside from syntactical observations, semantic elements are not sufficient to tell him/her how to interpret them. In order to discern structural patterns out of semantic observations alone, the researcher would need to rely on his/her ability to discern and interpret patterns. This is, in my opinion, an eminently subjective task and a misuse of semantic observations. It is only after the structure of a text is discerned, based on its own macro syntactical signs, that semantic observations can be correctly appreciated. At what level do semantic issues appear? When a sematic issue reappears, is it at the same level? Are they present in narrative or discursive texts? Are they part of the textual background or foreground? Only syntactic analysis can provide objective answers to these questions.

alone, seems either unwarranted or unwise. The following sections will propose a structure for the book of Malachi based on more objective criteria, namely, the syntax inherent to its text.

The Macro Structure of the Book of Malachi

This section presents the results of the three-step process of syntactic analysis, as presented in the introductory chapter.[20] Here I will describe how the different blocks relate to each other and thus establish the macro structure of the book. As was previously mentioned, this was accomplished by paying close attention to macro syntactical markers in the text. The resulting structure is graphically represented in the scheme below.

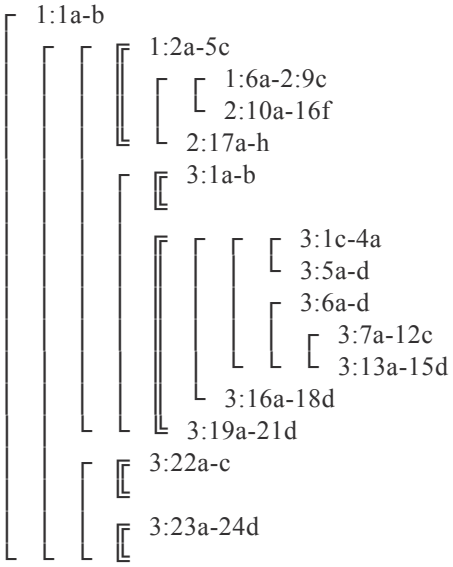

Figure 4 – Structure of the book of Malachi

The initial syntactical observation to arrive at the macro structure of the book of Malachi is to note that there are three very prominent text-units in the book: the heading in 1:1a-b, an unmarked direct speech by the Lord in 3:1a-b, and two successive unmarked direct speeches by the Lord in 3:22a-c and 3:23a-24d. These three text-units serve to initially divide the book into a heading (1:1a-b) and a body (1:2a-3:24d), of which 3:22a-24d function as a conclusion. The discussion of the sections of the book will follow in the order of their complexity. The way units are presented both describes and illustrates the process followed to discern the structure of the text.

20. See page 25.

Malachi 1:1a-b

The heading of the book is composed by two asyndetic nominal clause-atoms (1:1a-b). The first word in the book, משׂא, constitutes a clause atom by itself (1:1a). It stands in the absolute form and is therefore not connected to the construct chain that follows (1:1b). The second clause atom identifies the prophetic entity who transmits the word of the Lord, מלאכי.[21] The term needs to be understood as a proper name and not as a title. If this term were to be understood as a title, i.e., *my messenger*, the Lord would have to be the speaker.[22] But that is not the case, as he is spoken about in the third person singular.[23] The ending of this unit is marked by the use of an asyndetic *qatal* and a change to the first person singular in 1:2a.

Malachi 3:22a-24d

This text-unit at the end of the book is actually composed by two units, 3:22a-c and 3:23a-24d. The start of unit 3:22a-c is marked by an asyndetic and imperative clause. It contains an unmarked direct speech by an "I"-figure, which can only be identified as the Lord, speaking about Moses. There is no explicit addressee, for there is no second person. The start of unit 3:23a-24d is marked by an asyndetic clause and the use of the macro syntactic sign הנה.[24] It also contains an unmarked direct speech by the "I"-figure, that is, the Lord. Nonetheless, in this case the direct speech is about Elijah and is addressed to a second person plural. Because of the formal similarities between these two units, they form one textual block (3:22a-24d). That this block is separate from the previous unit (3:19a-21d) can be seen in the initial asyndetic clause and in the formal difference between the Lord's direct speeches; the former are marked, these are unmarked.

Malachi 1:2a-3:21d

In this unit we find Malachi 3:1a-b. This is a prominent text-unit for several reasons. It is headed by an asyndetic clause using the macro syntactical sign הנה. Furthermore,

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21. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 70.
22. This study presupposes that in Hebrew, as is the case in English and other languages, an entity would normally speak about itself using the first person singular. It is also presupposed that if an entity would speak about itself using the second or third person, some clear syntactical marker would indicate it. Note the normal usage in 3:1 where the Lord, using the first common singular, speaks about "my [his] messenger."
23. The translators of the LXX seem to have understood the term as a title and therefore translated "his messenger." Many modern Bible translators seem to be of the same opinion. See, Coggins and Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 188.
24. The uses of הנה are threefold: when "a speaker uses הנה to point to x in a speech situation…," "a narrator, and less frequently a speaker, points to the cognitive effects of an observation on a character (or the speaker himself/herself) for which he/she was unprepared…," and "a speaker or narrator points to a proposition which needs to be related to another proposition." Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Christo H. J. van der Merwe, "הִנֵּה and Mirativity in Biblical Hebrew," *Hebrew Studies* 52 (2011): 60–61.

here for the first time in the text, there is a first-person singular in an unmarked and unembedded direct speech.[25] This clause has also been identified as a climactic monocolon, which serve to open, close, or divide stanzas.[26]

In the previous text-unit (2:17a-i) there is a second person plural addressee, and the Lord is being spoken about. In 3:1a-b the Lord is the speaker, present as the "I"-figure, and there is no addressee. In a similar way, in the following unit (3:1c-4a) there is a second person plural addressee, and the Lord is spoken about. Thus, this unit stands apart from what precedes and what follows in the text. In this way 3:1a-b divides 1:2a-3:21d in three text-units: 1:2a-2:17i, 3:1a-b, and 3:1c-21d.

Unit 1:2a-2:17i starts with an asyndetic clause and contains marked and unmarked direct speeches. Unit 3:1a-b starts with an asyndetic clause and contains an unmarked direct speech. Unit 3:1c-21d starts with a conjunction and contains marked and unmarked direct speeches. The conjunction indicates this last unit's dependence upon the previous one. Furthermore, the third person singular in 3:1c refers directly back to the messenger and/or the Lord in 3:1a-b. Thus 3:1a-21d forms one text-unit. In this way, besides the conclusion in 3:22a-24d, we have two main text-units in the body of the book: 1:2a-2:17i and 3:1a-21d.

Malachi 1:2a-2:17i

This textual unit is formed by four blocks: 1:2a-5c, 1:6a-2:9c, 2:10a-16f, and 2:17a-i. We will briefly describe each block and how they are related.

Malachi 1:2a-5c

The start of this block is marked by an asyndetic *qatal* and a change to the first person singular in 1:2a. This block is formed by four units: three marked direct speeches by the Lord addressed to a second person plural (1:2a-d, 1:2e-3c, 1:4a-g), and an unmarked direct speech by an unknown speaker, also addressed to a second person plural (1:4h-5c). This last unmarked direct speech is recognized because there is a second person plural addressee in 1:5a-c, but the speaker is not the Lord, as he is spoken about in 1:5c. The Lord is also spoken about in 1:4i. Furthermore, the *w^e^-X-yiqtol* form in 1:5a refers back to the *w^e^qatal* form in 1:4h. Thus, there is an unmarked direct speech in 1:4h-5c in which a concluding or summary statement is presented.[27]

25. Although formally anonymous, from the context it is understood that the speaker is the Lord.
26. See, Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, 170–72.
27. A series of *w^e^qatal* forms is often concluded by a *w^e^-X-yiqtol* form. See, Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Supplement Series 86 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), sec. 11; Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 70.

It must be noted that this last direct speech begins with a conjunction (1:4h). This would imply that it is the speaker in 1:4h-5c, who introduces the formulas marking the direct speeches in 1:2a-4g. Thus, this block is all one direct speech, which is unmarked. The unknown speaker in 1:4h-5c introduces all the previous direct speeches. They are embedded direct speeches.

Malachi 1:6a-2:9c

The start of this unit is marked by an asyndetic clause with a prominent subject, due to inversion. There is also a change to an explicit second plural addressee, the priests (1:6gh). This block is formed by three text-units: 1:6a-1:8h, 1:9a-14g, and 2:1a-9c.

In 1:6a-1:8h we have marked and embedded speeches by the Lord addressed to a second person plural, the priests. The next two parallel units (1:9a-14g and 2:1a-9c) are marked using the macro syntactical sign ועתה. The conjunctions at the start of each unit indicate their dependence on 1:6a-1:8h.

In 1:9a-14g a first-person plural addresses a second person plural. The Lord also addresses a second person plural in marked and embedded direct speeches. In 2:1a-9c we have again marked and embedded speeches by the Lord and the second person plural is renominalized as the priests.

The formal parallelism of 1:9a-14g and 2:1a-9c would imply that both are spoken by the first common plural entity and are addressed to the same second plural entity, identified as the priests. Both units also contain words by an unidentified speaker, a curse in 1:14a-d and a declaration in 2:7a-c. These units' dependence on 1:6a-1:8h imply, in turn, that also the first-person plural is the one introducing the speeches of the Lord. The second person plural addressee corresponds to the priests again. Thus, in this block there is a first-person plural addressing a second person plural, the priests.

Malachi 2:10a-16f

The start of this text-unit is marked by an asyndetic rhetorical question and the re-entrance of the first-person plural.[28] The unit is in turn formed by three text units: 2:10a-d, 2:11a-12c, and 2:13a-16f.

In 2:10a-d there is a first-person plural addressing itself. In 2:11a-12c there is an unidentified speaker and addressee. Finally, in 2:13a-16f there is an unidentified speaker addressing a second person plural (2:13a). Since the conjunction in 2:13a indicates this unit's dependence upon the previous one, we can consider both units as being addressed

28. The last appearance of the first-person plural in the text was in 1:9b.

to the second person plural. Thus, this unit would have a first-person plural addressing a second person plural. The first-person plural addressing itself in 2:10a-d can be seen as a rhetorical device on the part of the first person. The speaker in this unit seems to initially identify with a group, but later disassociates himself from it.

We saw that 1:6a-2:9c presents a first-person plural addressing a second-person plural. Here in 2:10a-16f we also see a first-person plural addressing a second-person plural. We can therefore conclude that these two sections go together and form a larger text-unit: 1:6a-2:16f.

Malachi 2:17a-i

This is the last text-unit in block 1:2a-2:17i. The start is marked by an asyndetic *qatal*. This unit contains an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker, addressing a second person plural. Clauses 2:17b and 2:17d introduce two embedded direct speeches by the second person plural. As in 1:2a-5c and 1:6a-2:16f, this unit is addressed to a second person plural. Nonetheless, this section has no direct speeches by the Lord, as 1:2a-5c does. Thus, this section is closer to, and should be seen as, the culmination of 1:6a-2:16f, forming the text-unit 1:6a-2:17i. Finally, 1:6a-2:17i can be seen as an elaboration of 1:2a-5c.

Malachi 3:1a-21d

It was already established that 3:1a-b is a prominent text-unit and divides the body of the book of Malachi in three text-units: 1:2a-2:17i, 3:1a-b, and 3:1c-21d. It was also established that there was a major caesura between 1:2a-2:17i and 3:1a-b, and a minor caesura, mainly due to the conjunction, between 3:1a-b and 3:1c-21d. Since we have already discussed 1:2a-2:17i and 3:1a-b, we now turn our attention to 3:1c-21d.

Inside of the block 3:1c-21d there is another remarkable text-unit that helps to see the structure of the text: 3:16a-18d. Its start is marked by the use of an asyndetic clause and the macro syntactical sign אז. The start of the next unit (3:19a-21d) is market by an asyndetic clause and the macro syntactical sign כי־הנה. Besides the use of אז, this unit stands out for several reasons. Here we see for the first time in the text the character יראי יהוה (Fearers of the Lord). Also relevant is that this is the only unit containing a discursion, with *Sproßerzählung* outside a marked direct speech in the book.[29]

29. Schneider uses the term *Sproßerzählung*, "beginning narrative," to designate a change in the speaker's orientation from discourse to narration. See, Talstra, "Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew: The Viewpoint of Walter Schneider," 281. From the German *Sproß* (sprout) and *Erzählung* (narrative), thus a "sprout-narrative." This is called a "narrative discourse" by Niccacci. See, Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, secs. 74–78. Three other occurrences are: 1:2-3, 2:5, and 3:15.

Malachi 3:16a-18d

There are three text-units in 3:16a-18d: first, 3:16a-e, which is an unmarked and therefore unembedded narration about the fearers of the Lord; second, 3:17a-h, which is a marked direct speech by the Lord to an unidentified addressee; and last, 3:18a-d, which is an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker to a second plural. Despite the different orientation in the text-units, 3:16a-e containing a short narrative, and 3:17a-h and 3:18a-d containing discourses, they belong together since 3:17a-h and 3:18a-d are headed by conjunctions and are therefore syntactically dependent on 3:16a-e. In this way 3:16a-18d can be seen as a unit in which an unidentified speaker addresses a second person plural.

Malachi 3:16a-18d is seen as distinct from what precedes because of the change in speaker, from marked speeches by the Lord to an unidentified speaker. It is also distinct from what follows, i.e., marked direct speeches by the Lord. In this way, this relevant text-unit divides 3:1a-21d into three text-units: 3:1c-15d, 3:16a-18d, and 3:19a-21d.

The relationship between these three units can be established based on their syntactical characteristics. In 3:1c-15d and in 3:16a-18d there are unmarked and marked direct speeches by the Lord. In contrast, 3:19a-21d contains only marked direct speeches. Furthermore, 3:1c-15d and 3:16a-18d are addressed to a second person plural. But 3:19a-21d has no second person plural outside embedded speeches. It can thus be seen that 3:1c-15d and 3:16a-18d form the text-unit 3:1c-18d inside of 3:1c-21d.

Malachi 3:19a-21d

Remaining outside of 3:1c-18d, but inside of 3:1c-21d, is the text-unit 3:19a-21d. The start of this unit is marked by an asyndetic clause using the macro syntactical sign כי־הנה. The כי in 3:19a is cataphoric since it works as one expression in the construction כי־הנה. There are two marked direct speeches by the Lord in this text-unit. In 3:19a-g the Lord addresses an unidentified entity. In 3:20a-21d the Lord addresses a second person plural, the fearers of God's name (3:20a-b). Having discussed 3:16a-18d and 3:19a-21d, we now turn our attention to 3:1c-15d.

Malachi 3:1c-15d

Inside this unit there is yet another notable text-unit that helps to see the structure of the text: 3:6a-d. This unit's prominence can be seen because of an asyndetic and cataphoric כי,[30] followed by a highly prominent subject. First, the subject is inverted,

30. The כי is introducing the cause of a condition or situation. It thus serves to propel the implied reader forward. See Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.29.1.3.

coming before the verb. Furthermore, the first-person singular, already present in the verb, is nominalized twice as אני (I) and יהוה (Lord). This renominalization is striking, given that it is the Lord who is already speaking in the previous unit.

Malachi3:6a-d contains an unmarked direct speech by the Lord, addressed to a second person plural, made explicit through a vocative in 3:6bc: בני־יעקב (sons of Jacob).[31] The foregoing discussion implies that there is a caesura between 3:5d and 3:6a. This results in identifying two text-units inside 3:1c-15d: 3:1c-5d and 3:6a-15d.

Malachi 3:1c-5d. The start of this unit is marked by a change in speaker from the Lord to an unidentified entity.[32] There are two text-units inside of 3:1c-5d: 3:1c-4a and 3:5a-d. In 3:1c-4a there is an unidentified speaker addressing an also unidentified second person plural. In 3:5a-d there is a marked, and therefore embedded, direct speech by the Lord, also addressing a second person plural. It follows that it must be the unidentified speaker of 3:1c-4a who introduces the Lord's speech in 3:5a-d. Thus in 3:1c-5d we see an unidentified speaker addressing a second person plural.

Malachi 3:6a-15d. The direct speech by the Lord in 3:6a-d creates a caesura with what precedes and what follows, so here we are focusing on the text-unit 3:7a-15d. There are two other text-units in this pericope: 3:7a-12c and 3:13a-15d. The start of 3:7a-12c is marked by an asyndetic and emphatic prepositional phrase, due to inversion.[33] This text-unit contains marked direct speeches by the Lord addressed to a second person plural. The start of 3:13a-15d is marked by an asyndetic clause and another emphatic prepositional phrase due to inversion.[34] In this text-unit we find a marked direct speech by the Lord addressed to a second person plural. Thus, both 3:7a-12c and 3:13a-15d contain marked direct speeches by the Lord, addressed to a second person plural. This would form the unit 3:7a-15d. This would in turn be united to 3:6a-d. In this way the block 3:6a-15d contains marked and unmarked direct speeches by the Lord toward a second person plural, the sons of Jacob.

Text-units in the Book of Malachi

After briefly examining the features that dictate the macro structure of the text of Malachi, this section will discuss each text-unit in the book. I will describe where individual text-units begin and finish, the direct speeches contained in the units, and how units relate to each other. The analysis will be based on the same 15 blocks

31. The previous unit is also addressed to a second person plural, but it is unidentified there.
32. The change in speaker is not easy to perceive. This is discussed in detail in the section dealing with that textual unit.
33. The prepositional phrase appears before the verb, subject, and object.
34. In this case the prepositional phrase comes before the subject.

described in the section above, but will examine them individually, in order, and at a deeper level. Since the two clause-atoms that form the heading of the book (1:1a-b) were sufficiently discussed in the previous section, our analysis will start with the first unit of the body of the book.

Malachi 1:2a-5c

The beginning of the block 1:2a-5c is marked by an asyndetic *qatal* and the change in speaker from the third to the first person. The ending of the block is marked by the use of an asyndetic verbal clause in 1:6a. This block is formed by four text-units, three containing divine direct speeches and one containing a conclusion by an unidentified speaker.

The first unit (1:2a-d) contains a direct speech by the Lord, marked by 1:2b.[35] The speech is addressed to an unidentified second person plural and consists of 1:2a and 1:2c-d. That 1:2c-d is also spoken by the Lord can be seen in the permanence of the second person plural (1:2a, 2c),[36] the exact reversal of the statement in 1:2a from אהבתי אתכם (I have loved you) to אהבתנו (you have loved us) in 1:2d, and the use of a *w^e^qatal* in 1:2c, which mimics the force of the *qatal* in 1:2a. Thus, 1:2c is the introduction to a hypothetical, embedded direct speech by a second person plural. The content of the embedded direct speech is 1:2d.[37]

The second unit (1:2e-3c) also contains a direct speech by the Lord, as marked by 1:2f. The addressee is not specified in the text, nonetheless the custom of answering a question (1:2d) by using another question (1:2e), plus the use of the root אהב (1:2g) in connection to the previous uses in 1:2d and 1:2a, indicate that the second person of 1:2a has been renominalized as Jacob in 1:2e. In this verse, 1:2e, the characters Esau and Jacob are introduced. While Jacob is presented as loved/chosen (1:2g), in reference to 1:2d, Esau is presented as hated/rejected (1:3a).

The start of this second unit (1:2e-3c) is marked by an asyndetic rhetorical question (1:2e). The answer is found in 1:2g-3c. The marking of the direct speech, located

35. Here the Lord is presented as יהוה. This same title is also used in 1:3, 2:16, and 3:13. The rest of the book uses the title יהוה צבאות (1:4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 8, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 19, 21).
36. If another entity were speaking, we would see a change from the second to the third person in 1:2c.
37. L. J. de Regt says that, in the book of Malachi, "remarks are frequently put into the mouth of those who are being spoken to. They are objections to what the Lord has said before. Most of them are R[hetorical]Q[uestion]s (1:2,6,7, 2:14,17, 3:7,8,13,14. Except for the RQ in 3:14 they are followed by an answer from the speaker…" "Parts of Malachi are thus similar to dialogue although only one party speaks." These stylized dialogues, using RQs brings to mind the diatribe from Hellenistic world. L. J. de Regt, "Discourse Implications of Rhetorical Questions in Job, Deuteronomy and the Minor Prophets," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. de Waard, L. J. de Regt, and J. P. Fokkelman (Assen: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 74.

between the rhetorical question and the answer to it, serves to highlight both. The answer has two elements. First, the *wayyiqtol* (1:2g) narrates God's election of Jacob in the past and the *qatal* (1:3a) expresses God's past, but still present, rejection of Esau. Then, a second *wayyiqtol* (1:3b), continued by an elliptic clause (1:3c), narrates what Esau's rejection implicated.[38]

The beginning of the third unit (1:4a-g) is marked by an asyndetic כי. This unit contains another direct speech by the Lord, marked by 1:4e, and consists of 1:4a-d and 1:4f-g. The particle כה in 1:4e, being cataphoric, introduces explicitly only the direct speech in 1:4f-g. But the modal *yiqtol* (1:4a), that introduces Edom's speech in 1:4b-d as well as the two modal *yiqtol*-forms used in it (1:4c-d), show that 1:4a-d has to be connected to 1:4f-g.[39] Edom's speech in response to its still present state of devastation (1:4b) is actually a hypothetical situation spoken by the Lord. The two modal *yiqtol*-forms in the Lord's speech (1:4f-g) present what would be his response to the possible actions taken by Edom (1:4c-d). As was mentioned, the particle כי (1:4a) marks the beginning of this unit, but also, and more importantly, marks its connection to, and dependence upon, the previous unit. Thus, 1:4a-g is an elaboration of 1:2e-3c, and these two units (1:2e-4g) are in turn an elaboration of the first assertion from the Lord (1:2a-d). In the same way that the second person of the first unit is identified as Jacob in the second, the Esau of the second unit is identified as Edom in the third. The relation between these units is strengthened by the fact that the Lord remains the speaker in the direct speeches present in all three units.

The start of the fourth unit of this block (1:4h-5c) is marked by the change from marked direct speeches to an unmarked direct speech. In units 1:2a-d, 2e-3c, and 4a-g, the Lord is presented as the speaker of the embedded speeches as a first-person singular (1:2a, 2g, 3a, 4g). In this unit, he is spoken about as a third person singular (1:4i, 5b) in an unmarked speech. The absence of any marking of a direct speech in this unit also sets it apart from all previous units, where the speaker is always identified with a formula.

This unit contains a direct speech that shows the construction *w^e^qatal* (1:4h) plus *w^e^-X-yiqtol* (1:5a-b), which is often a marker of the conclusion of a discourse.[40] This speech can thus be identified as the conclusion to the whole block spoken by someone other than the Lord. This observation would in turn imply that the markers in 1:2b, 1:2f and 1:4e are spoken by the same speaker of 1:4h-5c.

38. This is the first of only four very brief *Sproßerzählungen* found in the book of Malachi.
39. A first position *yiqtol* is usually modal. See, Scott N. Callaham, "Mood and Modality: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
40. Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, sec. 59.

The concluding speech is divided into two parts: 1:4h-i and 1:5a-d, as can be recognized by the changes in person. Verse 1:4h-i is discussing a third person plural that is to be identified with Edom. The antecedent of the third person plural in 1:4h can be found in 1:4f, a reply to 1:4d, stating a possible action by Edom (1:4a) also named as Esau (1:2e). Verse 1:5a-c is directed to an unidentified second person plural, that is to be linked with the second person plural of 1:2a, and has been identified as Jacob. Thus, the conclusion of the block chiastically concerns the main two characters depicted in it: Esau/Edom and Jacob. Verse 1:5b introduces an embedded direct speech by the second person, Jacob. Verse 1:5c presents the content of the speech.

The block formed by 1:2a-5c is spoken by an unnamed speaker and directed to a second person plural, identified as a collective "Jacob" (1:2e). It begins by mentioning a direct speech by the Lord (1:2a-d), which is elaborated in 1:2e-4g. Verses 1:4h-5c are the conclusion to the whole block.

The last subunit (1:4h-5c) is a conclusion spoken by an unidentified speaker. This unidentified speaker must be the entity that introduces the marked speeches of the Lord and would, therefore, correspond to the prophetic figure identified as Malachi in the heading of the book.

Malachi 1:6a-2:9c

The block 1:6a-2:9c is the longest in the book and it is formed by three text-units (1:6a-8h; 1:9a-14g; 2:1a-9c). The start of the block is marked by an emphatic clause,[41] plus a change in addressee.[42] The asyndetic rhetorical question in 2:10a marks the beginning of the next block.

Malachi 1:6a-8h

This unit contains a direct speech by the Lord. As suggested by the double marking (1:6g and 1:8h), the speech is divided into two sections, 1:6a-6i and 1:6j-8h. The first section (1:6a-i) is addressed to a second person plural (1:6g) identified as "the priests" (1:6h). The position of the marking of the direct speech in 1:6g, which actually interrupts the speech,[43] serves to highlight the nature of the addressees: priests who

41. There is an inversion, with the subject appearing before the verb. Furthermore, the noun is asyndetic.
42. The first unit is addressed to a second plural identified as "Jacob", while this unit is addressed to a second person identified as "the priests."
43. The speech flows naturally from 1:6f to 1:6h, with the marking in 1:6g interrupting it. The speech contains a first-person singular (1:6c-f, i), but the marking has a third person singular (1:6g). Thus, the marking is not spoken by the Lord. If verse1:6g were not an interruption, 1:6i would read "despising his name" and not "despising my name."

are despising God's name.[44] This stands in contrast to sons who regularly honor their parents (1:6a).[45]

The second section of the speech by the Lord (1:6j-8h) is marked by 1:8h. Here the Lord continues to address a second person plural, the priests (1:6j).[46] This part of the Lord's speech contains a supposed exchange between the Lord and the priests (1:6j-7e) and the Lord's final arguments (1:8a-g).[47] The exchange is divided in two as marked by the introductions to the words of a second person plural (1:6j, 7b).

In the first "exchange" the Lord introduces an embedded direct speech by the second person plural (1:6j).[48] The content of speech is 1:6k. A reply from the Lord follows in 1:7a. In the second "exchange" the Lord again introduces an embedded direct speech by the second person plural (1:7b). The speech is found in 1:7c. A reply from the Lord follows again (1:7d-e). Then the Lord introduces (1:7d), yet another embedded direct speech by the second person plural (1:7e).

Despite the appearances, as in the previous block, there is no dialogue between the Lord and the priests. Though the words most likely do represent the actual feelings and sayings of the priests, the exchange never happens. The words uttered by the priest in 1:7e were not directly addressed to the Lord, because the Lord is present as a third person singular instead of a second person singular. These are words previously spoken and are here reported by the Lord, who remains the speaker throughout. Furthermore, it is the Lord who answers directly to the embedded speech in 1:6k. If another entity were reporting the speech, presenting what the Lord says and what the priests say, one would expect an introduction in 1:7a, but there is none. Thus, the Lord has always remained as the speaker, introducing and quoting their words.

Verse 1:8a-g constitutes the conclusion of the Lord's speech in this unit (1:6a-8h). Here, in response to the supposed exchange with the priests, the Lord presents three declarations addressed to a second person plural entity, which are followed by rhetorical questions. The first two declarations use the construction וכי plus *yiqtol*

44. A participle followed by a complement has a verbal function. See, Christo H. J. van der Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), sec. 20.3.
45. The imperfect (*yiqtol*) is sometimes used to express repeated or customary actions, and facts that are known to be so by experience. See, H. F. W. Gesenius, J. Euting, and M. Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), sec. 107.
46. The addressees are clearly identified by their action, offering sacrifices to the Lord (1:7a, 1:8a).
47. The absence of real dialogue in Malachi has been labelled as "pseudodialogue," an "assertion-objection-response rhetorical devise," or as "prophetic monologue." The supposed words of the people are considered fictitious. See, Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 21A:222; Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 9, 46.
48. If an entity other than the Lord would be speaking, we would read in the text "and they said."

(1:8a, c). The particle כי followed by a main clause may function to mark the clause as temporal. The action presented in the clause usually refers to some process or situation that has a fair chance of being real or actual.[49] In contrast, a first position *yiqtol* frequently denotes a subjunctive mode and therefore may indicate a possibility.[50]

Should these declarations be seen as indicating realities or possibilities? The two rhetorical questions (1:8b, d) do not help to clarify the modality of the clauses 1:8a, c. but clause 1:8e does. It is also addressed to the second person plural entity and presents an imperative. The rhetorical questions that follow (1:8f-g) make it evident that the actions mentioned in 1:8a, c are real and not just a possibility. The people have been presenting sick animals to the Lord and are thus challenged to do the same with their Persian governor. There is also a change from second person plural (1:8a, c) to singular (1:8e-g), so that the offences are described in the plural, but the moral challenge is addressed to the individual.[51] People, individually, are to honor and fear the Lord. A gift that a person would not dare give to a governor (1:8e) would in no way be acceptable to the Lord of hosts. Thus, 1:6a-6i contains the initial reproach by the Lord, and 1:6j-8h contains the supposed replies by the addressees and the Lord's final rebuttal.

In Malachi 1:6a-1:8h there are marked direct speeches by the Lord addressed to a second person plural, identified as the priests. That the speeches are marked using a formula which refers to the Lord implies that they are embedded. The Lord is not speaking directly. His words are introduced by an entity other than the Lord.

Malachi 1:9a-14g

The beginning of the second unit in this block is marked by a macro-syntactical sign (ועתה), an imperative (חלו), and the introduction of a first person plural (ויחננו).[52] This unit consists of eight sub-units: an unmarked direct speech by a first person plural addressed to a second person plural (1:9a-d), and a progression of six marked direct speeches by the Lord (1:9e-10c, 1:10d-g, 1:11a-e, 1:12a-13d, 1:13e-h, 11:14e-g) interrupted by an unmarked curse statement by an unidentified speaker (1:14a-d). These sub-units are mostly marked by the formula אמר יהוה צבאות (1:9e, 10e, 11e, 13d, 13h, 14f).

49. Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 433.
50. Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, 78.
51. This brings to mind the similar changes from plural to singular with a similar moral function in the book of Deuteronomy. See for example Deuteronomy 4:2-3, 8-9. See, Emmer Chacon, "A Divine Call to Relationship and a Covenantal Renewal in Deuteronomy 28:69-30:20: A Syntagmatic, Syntactic and Textlinguistic Analysis" (Doctor of Philosophy in Religion, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2010), 274–75.
52. The start of the third unit is also marked with ועתה (2:1a).

The first sub-unit (1:9a-d) contains a command to a second-person plural (1:9a) given by a first-person plural (1:9b). The conjunction at the beginning of this sub-unit marks its dependence upon the previous one. That fact, together with the repetition of the theme of lifting the face (1:8g and 9d), would show that the second person plural in 1:9a, c-d is to be identified as the priests.

Verses 1:9c-d must also be seen as directed by the first-person plural to the second-person plural, the priests. The Lord cannot be the speaker of 1:9a-d for several reasons: the reference to פני־אל (the face of God) instead of simply פני (my face), the use of the third person to refer to God (1:9b, d), and the presence of the unidentified first common plural in 1:9b. That means that the marker in 1:9e does not belong to this sub-unit, but rather introduces the next.[53]

The next five sub-units contain direct speeches by the Lord, the first three of which (1:9e-11e) will be shown to be closely connected. Verses 1:9e-10c present the first speech by the Lord, marked by 1:9e. This short speech is highly emphatic and emotionally charged as indicated by the use of גם, which serves to introduce intensive clauses (1:10a).[54] Furthermore, the use of two modal *yiqtol*-forms (1:10b-c) coupled with מי may serve to imply intense desire.[55] Verse 1:10d-g contains the second speech, as marked by 1:10e. The use of the conjunction and the continued presence of the second person plural show that 1:10f-g belongs together with 1:10d. In addition, the absence of the first person singular as a subject, either in 1:10a-c or in 1:11a-d, indicates that the verses 10d, f-g are depending on the formula in 1:10e. Furthermore, the repetition of the second person plural (1:10a, 10d) shows that this speech is a continuation or elaboration of the first.

The third direct speech by the Lord is found in 1:11a-d and is marked by 1:11e. A double use of כי and the repetition of the phrase גדול שמי בגוים (1:11a, d) serve to highlight the reason for the divine indignation expressed in 1:10d and 1:10f: God's name is indeed great among the nations.[56] Furthermore, that construction envelopes the declaration that in all places clean incense and gifts are being offered to the Lord (1:11bc).

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53. The use of אמר יהוה at the head of a text-unit to introduce a speech is unusual, but not unattested in the Hebrew Scriptures. See, Jeremiah 15:11, 46:25. The fronted use of כה אמר יהוה is much more common. See, Malachi 1:4a.
54. Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 153.
55. See, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, sec. 151; Jan Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose* (Jerusalem: Simor Publishing, 2012), 149; John C. L. Gibson and A. B. Davidson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Syntax*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1994), sec. 135.
56. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, 295.

The fourth speech is found in 1:12a-13c and marked by 1:13d. The speech is addressed to an unidentified second person plural (1:12a-b, 13a, c). The use of the conjunction, as well as the use of the third person singular pronoun (1:12a) referring to the Lord's name (1:11d), make clear this speech's connection to the previous one. As was already noted, the divine speech in 1:11a-d is itself a reaction to the speech in 1:10d-g. Thus, it is logical to identify the second person plural in 1:12a in the same way it has been identified in 1:9a-d and 1:10a, c, d, g: the priests.

The direct speech by the Lord contains embedded direct speeches by the priests (1:12c-d and 1:13b) marked by 1:12b and 1:13a respectively. The two *w^e^qatal*-forms in 1:13a, c provide background information backing the claim of 1:12b. The priests are said to profane (1:12a)[57] the Lord's name with three actions: saying that the Lord's table is defiled (1:12b-d),[58] saying that it is a hardship to serve the Lord (1:13a-b),[59] and sniffing at the fruit of Lord's table (1:13c).

The אוֹתוֹ in 1:13c is ambiguous as it might have as it antecedent any of the masculine singular nouns in 1:12c-d,[60] or refer to the אוֹתוֹ in 1:12a. The Greek and Syriac versions solve the ambiguity by having a third person plural instead of a singular,[61] thus assuming that the direct object refers to the table, with its fruit and food. Some sources propose that the direct object (DO) marker points to God and thus see this as a *tiqqun sopherim* for אותי,[62] but there is no textual evidence for this reading.[63] Building on that, others propose to actually correct the text and read אותי instead of אותו and bring the attack on God's name to the forefront.[64] All these solutions eliminate the problem, but do so by going outside of the text and its syntax.

57. The participle has a direct object attached and so functions as a verb.
58. The infinitive construct in 1:12b is dependent upon and elaborates the idea of the previous verb in 1:12a, which is actually a participle, but is functioning as a verb. See, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 20.1.1. "When used with the preposition בְּ, the action implied by the infinitive construct is *simultaneous* with that of the main clause… This construction can be translated 'as', 'when' or 'while'. Merwe, sec. 20.1.5.i. Verse 1:12b introduces the speech by the priests in 1:12cd.
59. מָה is used to indicate a strong negative emotion. See, Gibson and Davidson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 117. See also, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 147.
60. These are: שלחן (table), ניב (fruit), and אכל (food).
61. Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 150.
62. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 1020.
63. Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 150.
64. Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Historische Grammatik der Hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testamentes I* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1965), sec. 61.

I reject the possibility espoused by the Greek and Syriac texts, because no Hebrew manuscript presents a plural suffix. I basically agree with the interpretation, but reject the method for the solution offered by some rabbinic sources and some modern scholars, as it goes outside of the text and requires its emendation without any substantial reason for it. I believe a solution can be given that would fit the text and syntax of the passage without resorting to emendation. A simple option would be to see the DO marker in 1:13c as referring to the table to the Lord in 1:12c. A more elaborate solution would be to see the DO marker in 1:13c as referring back to the DO marker in 1:12a and would thus refer to the name of the Lord in 1:11d. This is because there seems to be a similar syntactical construction in 1:12a and 1:13c. Both start with the conjunction, have a second person plural, a verbal form, and a DO marker with a third person singular suffix. Also, there might be a pun intended in the parallel use of the roots חלל and חלל. נפח can also mean to play the flute or to blow through something hollow, and would thus complement the disrespectful expulsion of air as indicated by נפח. In this way, the marked speech by the Lord from 1:12a to 1:13c would start and finish with a reference to the dishonoring of his name.

Here again there is no dialogue. The direct speech of the second person plural, the priests, is embedded in the Lord's speech. Furthermore, the speech is not addressed to the Lord as he is mentioned in the third person (1:12c). The Lord is not spoken to, but rather spoken about.

The fifth speech is in 1:13e-g and is marked by 1:13h. The conjunction ו in 1:13e-f serves to link this speech to the previous one (1:13a, c).[65] Therefore, the *w^eqatal*-form is the continuation of the (past) verbal perspective. A first position *yiqtol* plus the interrogative ה presents a rhetorical question (1:13g). This clause would also seem to be linked to a previous declaration of the Lord in 1:10f-g. Thus 1:13e-g would apparently be summing up the argument presented by the Lord in this series of speeches.

Inserted between the fifth and the sixth speech there is a curse statement by an unidentified speaker (1:14a-d). Unlike all the other speeches, this statement is not marked. The Lord cannot be the speaker here because he is spoken about (1:14d).

The sixth and last speech of this unit is in 1:14e and 14g and it is marked by 1:14f. This concluding speech by the Lord is linked to the previous one(s) syntactically by

65. The direct object marker must be assumed before the passive participle גזול.

the use of the particle כי, and semantically by the mention of the Lord's name being feared among the nations in 1:14g.[66]

This unit, 1:9a-14g, begins with a command by an unidentified first-person plural to a second person plural, the priests. Then, a series of six speeches follow, in which the Lord is presented as the speaker (1:10d-13h, 14e-g) addressing a second person plural, the priests. Between the fifth and the sixth speeches, there is a curse statement by an unidentified speaker, who cannot be the Lord, against a "cheater" (1:14a-d). The identity of this "cheater" is not evident from the text. In the same way, the identity of the speaker of the curse cannot be established yet.

Malachi 2:1a-9c

The beginning of the third unit in this block is marked by the macro-syntactical sign ועתה (2:1a) and the renominalization of the second person plural as the priests (2:1ab). This unit contains three direct speeches by the Lord (2:1a-2h, 2:3a-6d, 2:8a-9c). Inserted between the second and the third speech there is an unmarked direct speech with an unidentified speaker and addressee (2:7a-c). Due to the asyndetic rhetorical question in 2:10a, the end of this unit is 2:9c.

The first direct speech by the Lord is in 2:1a-2c and 2:2e-h. The speech is marked by 2:2d and it is addressed to a second person plural (2:1a), identified as the priests (2:1b). That 2:2e-h belongs together with 2:1a-c is easily seen in that they contain the apodosis (2:2e-f) corresponding to the protasis (2:2a-b) of a conditional statement. Nonetheless, the conditional aspect of the message is truncated by 2:2g. Here the particle גם portrays emphasis, while the *qatal* denotes a past perspective. The Lord has already cursed, in view (כי) of the priests' lack of response (2:2h). It needs to be noted that there is no agreement in number of what is cursed. The threat is to curse the priests' "blessings" (feminine plural), but it is "her [it]" (feminine singular) that is actually cursed.

The second direct speech by the Lord is in 2:3a-4c and 2:5a-6d and it is marked by 2:4d. This speech continues and develops the ideas presented in the first speech. As in the previous speech, the speaker is present as a first-person singular (2:3a-b, 4b-c, 5a-d, 6c), and is identified as the Lord (2:4d). Also, as in the previous speech, the addressee is present as a second person plural (2:3a-4b). Though unidentified here, this entity must be the same second person plural of the previous speech, the priests

66. Cf. 1:11a, 11d, 12a.

(2:1a-b).[67] That 2:5a-6d belongs with 2:3a-4c is seen in that in all clauses of 2:5a-6d there is the presence of a third person singular that has its antecedent in Levi, mentioned in 2:4c.

Verse 2:3a (הנני גער לכם את־הזרע) has been understood in different ways. The difficulties are perceived both at the level of text and syntax. The term גער, "rebuke," is understood by some to be read as גדע, "cut," based on the way it is translated in the LXX and a supposed connection to 1 Sam 2:31.[68] Besides the reasons espoused by other authors,[69] the reading, גער, "rebuke" is to be preferred, in light of the support of other ancient witnesses,[70] and the existence of a virtually identical declaration in 3:11a, where גדע ,"cut," would make no sense and lacks support by any ancient witness.

The next words in the clause (לכם את־הזרע) are to be understood in connection with גער. This verb is used fourteen times in thirteen verses the Hebrew Bible. It is a trivalent verb, as it can take three complements: subject, direct object, and indirect object.[71] As usual in the Hebrew language, affixes or personal pronouns indicate the subject of this verb. On occasion, particles (ב, ל, את) indicate its direct or indirect object.

Most often גער appears with the preposition ב, used to indicate the DO of the verb;[72] however, on occasions no preposition is used.[73] Only in the book of Malachi the particle את appears with גער, although fulfilling its usual role, indicating the DO.[74]

Also unique to the book of Malachi is the use of ל with גער.[75] In light of the trivalent nature of this verb, the particle ל must be seen as indicating the indirect object (IO)

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67. The roots ארר (2:2fg) and גער (2:3a) carry a very similar semantic weight and this would also link these two speeches. See for example the use of the roots in Deuteronomy 28:20. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 170.
68. See, Graham S. Ogden and Richard R. Deutsch, *Joel & Malachi: A Promise of Hope - A Call to Obedience*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 91; Smith, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, 36.
69. See, David J. Clark and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 400; Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary*, 352.
70. See the note in the critical apparatus, Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, s.v. Mal 2:3; Gelston, 150.
71. Michael Malessa, "Valency," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 21.5.
72. Genesis 37:10; Ruth 2:16; Psalm 106:9; Isaiah 17:13, 54:9; Jeremiah 29:27; Nahum 1:4; Zechariah 3:2 (2×). See, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 72.7.
73. Psalm 9:6, 68:31, 119:21.
74. Malachi 2:3. The book of Malachi is fond of the use of the direct object marker (19 times).
75. Malachi 2:3, 3:11. There are many other interesting uses of ל in the book of Malachi. See for example the use in 3:16e meaning "concerning" or "about."

of the verb, i.e., "the entity that receives the indirect effect of an action."[76] Furthermore, as this construction is only found in two passages of Malachi, ideally the solution proposed should be applicable to both passages. For these reasons ל plus גער cannot be seen as indicating possession of what is rebuked,[77] because, even though syntactically it might indicate who owns (IO) that which is cursed (DO), semantically it would make no sense in 3:11a. Furthermore, the construction cannot be seen as indicating the one who benefits from something being rebuked,[78] because even though, syntactically it might indicate the one who receives a benefit (IO) for something being rebuked (DO), semantically it would make no sense in 2:3a. A third, and better, option is to see ל as indicating the reason for something being rebuked.[79] This idea would fit syntactically and semantically in both passages in Malachi. In 2:3a the Lord rebukes הזרע (the seed) because of the priests, i.e., because of their not honoring the Lord's name (2:2c) and their not putting the Lord's appeal to heart (2:2h). In 3:11a, the Lord rebukes באכל (the eater) because of you (the sons of Jacob 3:6c), i.e., because they do bring all the tithes into God's house (3:10a) and have therefore agreed to test His goodness (3:10c).

The term הזרע has been vocalized by some as הַזְּרֹעַ ("the shoulder", feminine singular).[80] This reading would seem to fit the declaration in 2:2g and thus solve the disagreement in number and gender between 2:2f and 2:2g. Nonetheless, the reading would not fit semantically with the verb גער.[81] Others vocalize הזרע as הַזֶּרַע ("the seed" masculine singular). This is the reading in the MT and supported by the Syriac and the Targums,[82] and the most common vocalization in the Hebrew Bible.[83] That reading also appears

76. Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 359.
77. Many Bible translations take the construction to mean possession. See for example the rendering of Malachi 2:3 in the New King James Version (NKJ), the New American Standard Bible (NAU), and New Jerusalem Bible (NJB). The New International version (NIV) also takes the construction to denote ownership in 3:11.
78. The NAU, NJB, and NKJ prefer the idea of benefit in Malachi 3:11. See also, Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1957), s.v. gā`ar; David J. A. Clines and John Elwolde, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. II (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 370; Leonhard Reckenberger, *Liber Radicum Sive Lexicon Hebraicum* (Ienae: Rudolph Croeker, 1749), 240. However, the use of ל in 3:20a would carry the meaning of "for your sake" or "for your benefit."
79. This is how The NIV renders Malachi 2:3.
80. The LXX, Aquila, and the Vulgate support this vocalization. See the critical apparatus in Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, s.v. Mal 2:3. זְרֹעַ is the defective reading of זְרוֹעַ. See Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. zr`.
81. Unless one assumes some sort of allusion to 1 Samuel 2:31, as the LXX translators apparently did.
82. Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, Malachi 2:3.
83. הזרע is used eight other times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is translated as "seed" or "descendants" in Genesis 38:9; Deuteronomy 22:9; Ruth 4:12; Psalm 126:6; Amos 9:13; Haggai 2:19. It is translated as "arm" or "shoulder" in Numbers 6:19 and Deuteronomy 18:3.

as more difficult because of its implications,[84] and should therefore be preferred. Clause 2:3a would thus translate, "I am about to rebuke, because of you, the seed."[85] The nature of the seed, whether literal or symbolic, remains ambiguous in the text. Lexical connections to 3:11a would favor a literal understanding. The only other use of the term in 2:15d would seem to favor a symbolic reading.

Using two *w^e^qatal*-forms, 2:3bc presents the results of the Lord's rebuke in 2:3a: the priests would be "united" to the excrement of the sacrifices they profaned (1:12a-13c). There is a discrepancy in subject and object in these clauses. In 2:3b there is a first person (the Lord) acting on a second person (the priests). But in 2:3c we find an unidentified third person acting on the same second person. This third person might be best understood as an impersonal reference to "someone." Thus, the text would read: and someone will carry you to it (the refuse). Using a *w^e^qatal* and a change in subject to the second person, 2:4ac presents the reason behind the Lord's rebuke: to "salvage"[86] his "covenant with Levi."[87]

Verses 2:5a-6d constitute the second part of the direct speech by the Lord. Here the third person refers to Levi, identified in the first part of the speech (2:4c). Through the use of *qatal*-forms and *wayyiqtol*-forms 2:5a-6d present a narrative of the way Levi behaved towards the Lord.[88]

Between the second (2:3a-6d) and third (2:8a-9c) direct speeches by the Lord there is a statement by an unidentified speaker (2:7a-c). The Lord cannot be the speaker here because he is spoken about (2:7c). Further, unlike the speeches of the Lord, this statement is not marked. Verse 2:7a-c also differs from 2:3a-6d and 2:8a-9c in that the former only contains *yiqtol*-forms, while the later have *wayyiqtol*-forms and *qatal*-forms. Furthermore, though all sections contain a third person singular, it is a different third person singular: in 2:3a-6d and 2:8a-9c the person is Levi, while in 2:7a-c the person is a priest. By a double use of כי, to start (2:7a) and close (2:7c) the statement, and having a supporting idea enclosed in the middle (2:7b) the unidentified speaker seems to be copying features of a previous speech by the Lord (1:11a-d).

84. Principle of *lectio difficilior.*
85. The use of הנה plus participle indicates an action that is about to happen. See, Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), sec. 37.6.d, 40.2.1.
86. ל plus the infinite construct of היה can be used to express the continuation of an action or state. See G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), s.v. Hāyah.
87. A covenant with Levi is mentioned nowhere outside the book of Malachi (except a possible mention in Deuteronomy 33:9). A covenant with the Levites in mentioned in Nehemiah 13:29 and Jeremiah 33:21.
88. Verses 2:5b-d represent the second *Sproßerzählung* in Malachi.

The third speech by the Lord is found in 2:8a-c and 2:9a-c. It is marked by 2:8d. Verse 2:8a-c and 2:9a-c virtually mirror each other, both syntactically and semantically. In 2:8a we have a second-plural personal pronoun plus a second-plural *qatal*-form and a reference to "the way." In 2:8b there is a reference to the Torah. In response, in 2:9a we have a first-singular personal pronoun plus a first-singular *qatal*-form. In 2:9b there is a reference to "the Lord's way", [89] and in 2:9c there is a reference to the Torah. This speech is also closely connected, by contrast, to the second part of the second speech. While the Lord had a covenant of life and peace with Levi (2:5a), the priests have ruined it (2:8c). While Levi rightly communicated the Torah (2:6a) and caused many to turn from iniquity (2:6d), the priests caused many to fall with the Torah (2:8b). While Levi walked with the Lord (2:6c), the priests left the Lord's way (2:8a). Thus, this speech serves as a conclusion to the second speech and by extension also to the first.

Malachi 2:10a-2:16f

The beginning of this block is marked by a series of asyndetic rhetorical questions and the reintroduction of a first-person plural in the text (2:10a-d). Furthermore, clauses 2:10a-b are made prominent thought the use of inversion; in both clauses the object comes before the subject or verb. The block is formed by three text units: 2:10a-d, 2:11a-12c, and 2:13a-16f. The next block starts in 2:17a with an asyndetic declaration by an unidentified speaker to a second person plural.

In 2:10a-d there is an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified first-person plural addressing itself by means of mostly self-accusatory rhetorical questions. The parallelism on 2:10a and b equate the terms אב (father) and אל (God).

Unit 2:11a-12c contains an unmarked direct speech with an unidentified speaker and addressee. The start of the next unit is marked by an asyndetic *qatal* and the introduction of a new character: Judah. Clauses 2:11a and c are parallel and the dependent clauses 2:11b and d are also parallel. In the first parallel clauses the character Judah is presented as a feminine acting treacherously (בגד in 2:11a) and as a masculine polluting the holiness of the Lord (הלל in 2:11c). In this way the offences of the first-person singular in the previous unit, acting treacherously (בגד in 2:10c) and polluting the covenant of the fathers (חלל in 2:10d), are attached to Judah. So, through the repetition of the lexemes בגד and חלל the text implies that the first-person plural in 2:10a-d is to be identified as Judah in 2:11a-11e.

89. כפי אשר would have the same function as כאשר as so would be translated "because." See, M. J. Mulder, "Die Partikel יען," in *Syntax and Meaning: Studies in Hebrews Syntax and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. C. J. Labuschagne (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 80.

In the second set of parallel clauses the doing of abomination in Israel and Jerusalem (2:11b) is equated to marrying of the daughter of a foreign god (2:11e). This refers to the marrying of pagan women.[90] The terms Judah (2:11a), Israel (2:11b), and Jerusalem (2:11b) are to be taken as referring to the same or at least equivalent entities. This connection between Judah and Israel is further strengthened by the reference to Jacob (2:12b). The unit ends with a first position *yiqtol* in 2:12a, expressing a desire for God's judgment upon those who "make her" (2:12b),[91] the abomination mentioned in 2:11b, and yet offer a gift to the Lord.

The start of the last unit in this block (2:13a-16f) is marked by an indicative pronoun used as a macro-syntactical sign, זאת. The conjunction וְ in 2:13a indicates this unit's dependence upon previous one. The unit contains an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker addressing a second person plural (2:13a). Since this unit refers to a "second thing," the second person does, we can assume the previous unit is also addressed to this same second person plural entity. Verse 2:14a marks an embedded direct speech by the second person plural. The speech is in 2:14b.

It is readily apparent that there is a causal relation between 2:14b (על־מה) and 2:14c (על כי).[92] What is not easily perceived is at what level the connection is made. Three *qatal*-forms point to past realities that explain the Lord's reaction to the people's gifts. He has testified between man and wife (2:14c), people have acted treacherously (2:14d),[93] and the Lord did not make one the unlawful unions (2:15a). The use of the root בגד (2:14d) would semantically connect this unit to the previous two units, and thus imply that the על כי in 2:14c is connected, not just to 2:13a-14b, but to 2:10a-12c as well.

Verse 2:15a-d has been variously translated due to the difficulties in identifying the entities it mentions.[94] In 2:15a, "one" seems to refer to the unlawful union of a man and a woman, in 2:15b "him" seems to refer to the one who has abandoned the wife of his youth, and in 2:15c "the one" seems to refer to a hypothetical person who would

90. The text refers to the literal marrying of pagan women and not to some kind of spiritual adultery, see 2:14c-e.
91. This can be seen as a curse statement. See, Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 339.
92. Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed., Subsidia Biblica 27 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Intituto Biblico, 2006), 2:639. See also, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 158.
93. The mention of the word "covenant" may be understood as agreement or promise. There are no other mentions in the Hebrew Bible of such a covenant between man and wife.
94. "In poetic (or prophetic) language there sometimes occurs (supposing the text to be correct) a more or less abrupt transition from one person to another." Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 144.

seek the seed of God. Despite the uncertainties, one thing is clear: 2:15a contains a negation and not a rhetorical question.

The conclusion to the arguments in this unit is given in two marked and embedded direct speeches by the Lord. The first speech is in 2:15e-16a, and c and is marked by 2:16b. A first position *w^e^qatal* in 2:15e indicates a future action, perhaps having the force of a command or desire. In 2:15f there is an apparent disagreement in number, "with the wife of your (second person singular) youth, he (third person singular) should not act treacherously." The identity of these characters will be discussed later in our study.

The second speech is in 2:16e-f and is marked by 2:16d.[95] The speaker is the Lord, and the addressee is a second person plural. This speech repeats the instructions of 2:15e-f, but eliminates ambiguities. The addressee is no longer an impersonal third person singular, but a second person plural. The first position *w^e^qatal*, and the negation plus *yiqtol,* seem to have the force of a command or desire.

Malachi 2:17a-h

An asyndetic q*atal* marks the beginning of this unit. The unit contains an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker addressed to a second person plural (2:17a-b, d). This speaker cannot be the Lord since he is spoken about in the third person (2:17a, g, h). The second person plural is charged with wearying the Lord with their words (2:17a). Their supposed reported speech, "how did we make weary" (2:17c), is marked by 2:17b. Verse 2:17d marks a second embedded speech by the second person plural (2:17e-17i).

Malachi 3:1a-b

This is a very brief unit consisting of only two clauses. The beginning of the unit is marked by the asyndetic macro-syntactical sign הנה and a change to a first-person singular speaker (3:1a).[96] The unit contains an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker, presumably the Lord (יהוה), who announces the imminent sending of "his messenger" (מלאכי). The use of the interjection הנה plus participle indicates an action that is just about to happen (3:1a).[97] The *w^e^qatal* in 3:1b indicates

95. The marker, "said the Lord God of Israel" (2:16b) is unique to Malachi. The phrase כה־אמר יהוה אלהי ישׂראל is used 32 times in the Hebrew Bible. Only here it is used without the initial כה. It is interesting to note that the first time the full phrase is used, the Lord argues in *favor* of שׂלח his people from Egypt. Here the Lord argues *against* the שׂלח of wives.
96. The construction הנה plus a first person singular plus a participle is used three times in the book of Malachi (2:3a, 3:1a, and 3:23a).
97. Van Wieringen, "The Prophecies Against the Nations in Amos 1:2-3:15," 10.

the future action to happen right after the imminent arrival of the messenger, he will prepare or clear the way before the first-person singular.

This unit and the units that follow can be seen as a response to the question of 2:17h. This sentiment is explicit in 4QXIIa, where the preposition לכן (therefore) appears before the interjection הנני (behold me), indicating a clear connection between 3:1ab and what precedes it.[98]

Malachi 3:1c-4a

The change from the first to the third person, as well as a change in speaker,[99] separates this unit from the previous one; nonetheless, the conjunction in 3:1c indicates this unit's dependence upon it. The unit is composed of sub-units, namely 3:1c-h and 3:2a-4a.

The change of speaker between 3:1b and 3:1c is not easy to identify. However, after careful analysis of the units, it becomes apparent. In the first sub-unit (3:1c-h) there is an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker towards a second person plural (3:1d, f).[100] The lord (אדון) cannot be the speaker, as he is spoken about. He is said to enter "his" temple. The natural way to understand the text is that the third singular points to the noun that follows, the lord (אדון) (3:1c) and not to the Lord (יהוה), whom we assume as the speaker of 3:1a-b. Two titles, the lord (אדון) and the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית), are mentioned in 3:1c-f. The parallel structure in 3:1d and 3:1f suggests that the titles in 3:1c and 3:1e refer to the same entity. This is also seen in the use of one *yiqtol*-form (3:1c) which governs both entities, the lord (אדון) in 3:1c and the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) in 3:1e. Furthermore, verse 3:1g contains an embedded speech by the Lord (יהוה), which is marked by 3:1h. In his speech, the Lord announces the imminent arrival of a third person singular.[101] Here again, the use of a singular verbal form, and not a plural, in connection to the titles lord (אדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית), further suggests that they represent the same entity and not two different entities. Also, that the Lord (יהוה) refers to a third person singular suggests that he himself and the one entity entitled lord (אדון) and messenger

98. Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 151. See also, William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), s.v. Lachen; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), s.v. Ken.
99. Assuming it is the Lord (יהוה) who speaks in 3:1a-b.
100. This unmarked speech includes the marked embedded speech of the Lord in 3:1g.
101. The construction הנה־בא is used only two other times in the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Samuel 3:24 and Ezekiel 17:12. In both cases it refers to a third person singular entity. It carries the idea of, "behold, he goes", rather than, "behold, it happens."

of the covenant (מלאך הברית) are not the same entity. The Lord (יהוה) and the lord (אדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) can be one entity, only if we consider the words of the Lord as illeistic, which I find unwarranted here.[102]

A doublet of rhetorical questions marks the start of the second sub-unit (3:2a-4a). The conjunction in 3:2a indicates coordination with the previous sub-unit, which also starts with the conjunction. This unit, as the previous one, contains an unmarked direct speech by an unidentified speaker, directed towards a second person plural. The speaker is not the Lord, as he is spoken about in 3:3e and 3:4a. Additionally, this sub-unit elaborates on the third-singular entity, who the previous sub-unit announced. Verse 3:2a-b introduces what appear to be rhetorical questions about the difficulty of being unaffected by the coming of this entity. Through a series of *w^e^qatal*-forms, 3:2c to 3:3f present the future actions of the entity. Verse 3:4a presents the results of the entity's actions: the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be accepted by the Lord (יהוה) once more.[103] Here again we see a distinction between the Lord and the lord and messenger of the covenant.

As we have seen, Malachi3:1c-4a is formed by two parallel sub-units, 3:1c-h and 3:2a-4a. Both begin with the conjunction ו, both are addressed to a second-person plural, and both discuss a third person singular entity titled as lord (אדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית). The lord and messenger of the covenant cannot be the speaker, as he is referred to in the third person in 3:1c. Likewise, the Lord (יהוה) cannot be the speaker, as he is referred to in the third person in 3:3e and 4a. This means that the speaker of this unit is an entity other than the lord (אדון) or the Lord (יהוה). Thus, the change in speaker from 3:1a-b to 3:1c.

The speech of the Lord (יהוה) in 3:1g, referring to a third-person singular, and the reference to the Lord as a third-person singular while describing the work of the lord (אדון) clearly suggest the Lord and the lord are separate entities. If this is so, then, in this unit, the Lord (יהוה) would be acknowledging the announcement of the coming of a lord (אדון), who is owner of the Temple and is the messenger of the covenant

102. In his study of illeistic declarations by God, Roderick does not deal with Malachi 3:1. He does argue that is it fairly common for God to refer to himself in the third person in the Hebrew Bible, to which I would tentatively agree. But I do not consider this is a case of illeism. The syntax of the text points to an entity discoursing about another entity. See, Elledge, Ervin Roderick, "The Illeism of Jesus and Yahweh: A Study of the Use of the Third-Person Self-Reference in the Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Its Implications for Christology" (PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

103. Judah and Jerusalem are mentioned previously in 2:11a-c in much less favorable terms.

(מלאך הברית), whom people long for and delight in. This conclusion is not widely accepted and remains a much-contested topic.[104]

Malachi 3:5a-d

The beginning of this unit is marked by a change in speaker, from the third to the first person and by a change from an unidentified speaker to the Lord. This short unit contains a direct speech by the Lord, addressed to a second person plural (3:5a). The speech is marked by 3:5d. It announces two actions by the Lord: he will visit for judgment and will quickly testify against transgressors. Clause 3:5d presents a long list of transgressors preceded by ב: (1) the sorcerers, (2) the adulterers, (3) the false witnesses, (4) the oppressors of the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan, and (5) those who bend justice against the foreigner.[105] This last phrase "ומטי־גר" is not preceded by ב, nonetheless it must be assumed otherwise the text would be incomprehensible.[106] The last clause of the speech (3:5c) seems to be best understood as the epitome of all those against whom the Lord will testify: those that do not fear him.

Malachi 3:6a-d

The start of this unit is marked using a very emphatic construction (3:6a). It uses two extra words to add emphasis. First, we find the word אני which is not needed, since the first-person singular is already present in the verb. Second, there is a renominalization of the divine name יהוה, which is not necessary either, since it is clear from the context that the speaker is the Lord. Furthermore, this clause begins with the particle כי, that usually functions anaphorically. Nonetheless, in this instance it should be seen as introducing the cause of a condition or situation.[107] It would thus actually propel the implied reader forward, rather than backward. This brief unit

104. See also, Andy R. Espinoza, "Elena G. de White y La Interpretación de Malaquías 3:1," in *Elena G. de White: Manteniendo Viva La Visión*, ed. Hector O. Martín y Daniel A. Mora (Nirgua, Venezuela: Ediciones SETAVEN, 2015), 185–203. For other interpretations see, Bruce V. Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 252–55; John J. O'Keefe, "Christianizing Malachi: Fifth-Century Insights from Cyril of Alexandria," *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996): 136–58; S. D. Snyman, "Once Again: Investigating the Identity of the Three Figures Mentioned in Malachi 3:1," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27 (2006): 1031; Andrew S. Malone, "Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 215–28; Andrew S. Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 21 (2011): 297–314; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Malachi's Eschatological Day of Yahweh: Its Dual Roles of Cultic Restoration and Enactment of Social Justice (Mal 3:1-5; 3:16-4:6)," *Old Testament Essays* 27 (2014): 53–81.
105. Wielenga prefers the term "immigrant" to reflect the modern custom of identifying as immigrants those with permanent residency in a land where they were not born. Wielenga, "The Gēr [Immigrant] in Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology," 2.
106. See, Clark and Hatton, *A Handbook on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 437.
107. See, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.29.

contains an unmarked direct speech by the Lord, addressed toward a second person plural (3:6b), renominalized as the Sons of Judah (3:6c).

The unit is presented in the form of a parallelism. The particle כי marks the cause of a condition. After that, follow a personal pronoun, a noun, and a negative *qatal* verbal form (3:6a). The next clauses present the same structure. The conjunction ו marks the condition stemming from the cause (3:6b). After that follows a personal pronoun (3:6b), a noun phrase (3:6c), and a negative *qatal* verbal form (3:6d).

The particular use of כי, propelling the implied reader forward, the emphatic nature of the opening of the unit, plus the renominalization of the first and the second plural serve to imply that this speech constitutes the beginning of the series of divine speeches that follow. This would, in turn, imply that 3:5a-d would conclude a previous block rather than open the series of divine speeches that follow.

Malachi 3:7a-12c

The beginning of this unit is marked by an asyndetic prepositional phrase. The phrase is also prominent, due to inversion. The unit is divided into five sub-units (3:7a-g, 3:8a-9c, 3:10a-f, 3:11a-d, and 3:12a-c), all containing direct speeches by the Lord. The speeches are addressed to a second person plural identified as "the whole nation" in 3:9c. All speeches, except the second, are marked.[108]

Malachi 3:7a-g contains a direct speech by the Lord marked by 3:7e. The speech is addressed to an, as yet, unidentified second person plural. Through the use of two *qatal*-forms the Lord accuses the second person plural of two accomplished actions: departing from His statutes and not keeping them (3:7a-b). Then follows an imperative, which contains a command (3:7c), followed by a modal *yiqtol*, a cohortative (3:7d). This construction, imperative plus conjunction plus cohortative, serves to express purpose or consecution.[109] The second clause is logically subordinated to the first.[110]

The Lord continues to be the speaker in Malachi 3:7f-g. It is the Lord who introduces the embedded speech with the supposed response of the second person plural.[111]

108. Malachi 3:7e, 10d, 11d, 12c.
109. Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2:381-382.
110. The translation should therefore be, "do x so that y happens" or "do x and then y will happen." See, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 108; Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 19.4.2; Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 141.
111. Note that the text reads, "you say" (3:7f, 3:8c) instead of "they say." This indicates that it is the Lord who is speaking and not the discourser or the prophetic voice in the text.

Malachi 3:7f marks the introduction of their statement and 3:7g gives the content of their statement, "how should we return?" The question marker must come at the beginning of the clause. So, the *yiqtol*-form is occupying the first possible position in the clause and therefore needs to be seen as modal. Furthermore, all the other uses of במה in Malachi (1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3: 8) mark negative and defensive statements. This one is no exception. The supposed speech by the second person plural is a defiant statement and not a declaration of present or future action.

The beginning of the next sub-unit (3:8a-9c) is marked by an asyndetic modal *yiqtol* (3:8a). This sub-unit contains an unmarked direct speech by the Lord, addressed to a second-person plural identified as "the whole nation" (3:9c). This speech presents another supposed exchange between the Lord and the second-person plural. Verse 3:8a-b presents the Lord's initial words. The first position *yiqtol* in 3:8a is modal. Therefore, this question is not indicating a fact ("will a man rob God?"), but rather implies that such an act would be impossible ("could a man rob God?" or undesirable ("should a man rob God?"). Clause 3:8b makes clear that from the divine perspective people are in fact robbing God. The question should then be seen as presenting the desirability of such action.

Verse 3:8c marks the supposed response by the second person plural, directly addressing God in 3:8d. God's unmarked response follows 3:8e. The absence of marking for the Lord's reply highlights the fact that this is no dialogue. The Lord has remained the speaker who just reports the real or fictitious words of the second plural. Verse 3:9a-c presents the Lord's energetic conclusion to the "dialogue."

Verses 3:9a and b stand out for three reasons: both clauses are prominent through inversion,[112] in both clauses the second plural personal pronoun serves to give emphasis,[113] and both clauses present a similar syntactical structure: a prepositional phrase, a second person plural personal pronoun, and a participle.[114] Bible translations usually render these participles with different verbal tenses in their target language, but there is no reason for this since both participles seem to be parallel. The second person "is being cursed" because they "are robbing" God. Both actions are happening at the present moment in the text.

The start of 3:10a-f is marked by an asyndetic imperative. This sub-unit also contains a speech by the Lord, marked by 3:10d, addressed to a second person plural (3:10e).

112. Having the prepositional phrase (3:9a) and object (3:9b) in first position.
113. "You yourselves are being cursed because you yourselves are robbing me."
114. Malachi 3:9a: במארה אתם נארים. Malachi 3:9b: ואתי אתם קבעים.

The marking divides the speech into two sections. In the first section (3:10a-c) there are two imperatives: bring the whole tithe (3:10a) and test me (3:10c).[115] The second section (3:10e-f) can be seen as presenting the consequences for the second person of obeying the imperatives. Through the construction אם־לא plus *yiqtol* (3:10e), and three *w^e^qatal*-forms (3:10f, 3:11a, 3:12a) the Lord emphatically promises to bless the second person plural for their faithfulness.[116]

The last two sub-units are quite similar. They are both marked direct speeches by the Lord, addressed to a second-person plural, begin with a *w^e^qatal*-form, and contain modal *yiqtol*-forms complementing a *w^e^qatal* form. The direct speech by the Lord in 3:11a-c is marked by 3:11d. A *w^e^qatal* presents the main promise: the Lord would rebuke crop plagues (3:11a). Two modal yiqtol-forms present the desired consequences of the promise. The second speech follows a similar pattern. The Lord's speech in 3:12a-b is marked by 3:12c. A *w^e^qatal* presents the main promise (3:12a) and a modal *yiqtol* presents the desired outcome of the promise (3:12b). Clauses 3:12a-b both emphasize their subject. In 3:12a, the subject, all the nations, is made prominent through inversion.[117] In 3:12b the subject, the second person plural, is made prominent through the presence of the personal pronoun.[118]

Malachi 3:13a-15d

The start of this unit is marked by an asyndetic *qatal*-form. The unit contains a direct speech by the Lord addressed toward a second-person plural. The speech consists of two parts. The first part (3:13a-d) is marked by 3:13b. Here the Lord speaks (3:13a) and introduces (3:13c), an embedded speech, with the words of reply by the second-person plural (3:13d). The second part of the Lord's speech (3:14a-15d), contains the reaction of the second plural, as reported by the Lord. Verse 3:14a marks the introduction to the speech. The *qatal*-form in 3:14a indicates that in this speech, the Lord reports words supposedly spoken by the second-person plural in some previous occasion, i.e., these words are not being spoken at the present moment in the text. An asyndetic noun marks the start of the accusations of the second person plural (3:14b-c).

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115. The first position *yiqtol*-form in 3:10b is subjunctive. The use of a jussive after and imperative in 3:10b serves to indicate an action that will result from another action. See, Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 148.
116. See, Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 149; Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 41.3.4.
117. In 1:11 and 1:14 "the nations" are praised for their faithfulness to the Lord. Here "the nations" praise the second person plural.
118. In 1:10 the Lord is not "pleased" with a second person plural. Here they are declared a land of "pleasure."

They present their charge using two *qatal*-forms (3:14d-e), indicating that their "keeping" and "walking" are already accomplished actions.

The macro-syntactical sign ועתה marks the conclusion of their argument:[119] the insolent are blessed (3:15a). They present their conclusion by, again, using two *qatal*-forms (3:15bc), indicating that the insolent's "being established" and "testing" are in the past. Moreover, the *wayyiqtol*-form in 3:15d would mark a shift from discursion to narration.[120] This *wayyiqtol* would continue the past perspective of the *qatal*-forms and would bring the action from the realm of ideas to the realm of facts. In the eyes of the second person plural, the insolent have indeed escaped.

Malachi 3:16a-18d

The start of this unit is marked by an asyndetic clause, the macro-syntactical sign אז and the introduction of characters not seen before in the text, the "fearers of the Lord" (3:16a). This unit is composed of three sub-units: one narrative (3:16a-e) and two direct speeches (3:17a-h and 3:18a-d). The narration is presented by an unidentified entity and is about the "fearers of the Lord."[121] They are presented as having spoken to one another (3:16a).[122] The response of the Lord is presented in a short narrative, using three *wayyiqtol*-forms: The Lord paid attention (3:16b), heard (3:16d), and a book was written (3:16e). As in 3:15d, these *wayyiqtol*-forms mark a brief narrative inside a discursive text.[123] There are only three other narrative passages, marked by *wayyiqtol*-forms, in the book of Malachi: 1:2-3, 2:5, and 3:15. Therefore, this unit must be seen as a direct response to the previous one; i.e., the conversation of the "fearers of the Lord" must be somehow connected to the blasphemous allegations of the second person plural there (3:15d).

Two direct speeches follow the narrative. The first is a marked and embedded direct speech, by the Lord. The speech is found in 3:17a-h and is marked by 3:17b. Two *w^e^qatal*-forms announce divine promises. The Lord promises that they would be to him (3:17a) a special possession (3:17e) in the eschatological day. The splitting of the object phrase "לי סגלה", by placing in between the discourse marker (3:17b) followed by a prepositional phrase (ליום אשר אני עשה), serves to highlight the designation of the

119. ועתה is used in many cases to indicate the conclusion of a discourse. See, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 44.6.
120. This is the third so-called *Sproßerzählung* in Malachi.
121. The narrator cannot be the Lord, as he is referred to in the third person singular (3:16c-e).	
122. The *niphal* form is used in a reciprocal way. Thus, the translation, "spoke among themselves." See, Jutta Körner, *Hebräische Studiengrammatik* (Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1990), 145.
123. This is the fourth and longest *Sproßerzählung* in the text. Nogalski highlights the "narrative-like" nature of this passage. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, 184.

object: סגלה (treasure).[124] The Lord also promises to spare them (3:17f). This speech belongs with the previous narrative because its two main verbs (3:17a and f) refer back to the "fearers of the Lord" in 3:16e. Nonetheless, this speech is not directed toward the "fearers of the Lord", it is about them.

The beginning of the second and last direct speech in this unit is marked by a return to addressing a second person plural (3:18a). The speaker remains unidentified in the text.[125] By means of *w^e^qatal*-forms, the second-person plural is promised to be able to return (3:18a) and distinguish once again between the righteous and the wicked (3:18b). This speech belongs with the previous one because of the conjunctions. Furthermore, this speech elaborates on the identity of those who serve God (3:18c), initially presented in 3:17h.

Malachi 3:19a-21d

This unit is divided into two subunits. Both subunits (3:19a-g and 3:20a-21d) contain direct speeches by the Lord, marked by 3:19f and 3:21d, respectively. In many cases the particle כי serves to express a logical or temporal consequence.[126] In those cases it is cataphoric in nature and points the reader back to something already present in the text. Nonetheless, כי can also serve to indicate emphasis or to highlight a declaration,[127] or even to introduce an oath.[128] In those cases it is anaphoric in nature and points the implied reader forward. In 3:19a, כי is joined to הנה, a macro syntactical marker with a clear anaphoric function. So, in 3:19a, כי should be seen as anaphoric, pointing the implied reader forward.[129] Thus, the exclamation כי־הנה (3:19a) marks the start of this unit.

The construction הנה plus participle in 3:19a indicates an action that is about to happen.[130] Two *w^e^qatal*-forms indicate the actions that will happen in that fiery coming day: insolents and doers of wickedness will be stubble (3:19c) and they will be set ablaze (3:19d). A *yiqtol*-form indicates the final result: the day will leave them completely destroyed (3:19g). This last clause belongs with this subunit, and not the

124. סגלה is a term with very significant connotations that will be discussed in the semantic analysis of the text.
125. The speaker is not the Lord as he is spoken about (3:18c).
126. See for example, Waltke and O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 665.
127. See for example, Waltke and O'Conner, 679.
128. Waltke and O'Conner, 679.
129. There is a previous unit in Malachi that also begins with 3:6) כי a-d).
130. הנה serves to introduce exclamations of immediacy. The immediacy is usually heightened in clauses with participles. See, Waltke and O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, sec. 40.2.1.

next one, because of the anaphoric nature of אשר (3:19g), which points back to the day in 3:19d,[131] and in 3:19a.

The beginning of the second sub-unit (3:20a-21d) is marked by the introduction of an addressee, a second person plural (3:20a) identified as "fearers of God's name" (3:20b). Four *w^eqatal*-forms announce their actions: they see the "sun of righteousness" appear for their healing (3:20a), they will go out (3:20e), they will jump (3:20f), and they will crush the wicked (3:21a). Again, a *yiqtol*-form indicates the final result: in the day of God's making, the wicked will be ashes under the feet of the righteous (3:21b). This subunit belongs with the previous one because of the linking conjunction in 3:20a and the continued reference to "the day" (3:21b).

Malachi 3:22a-c

This brief unit, having only three clauses, begins with an asyndetic imperative. It contains an unmarked direct speech by the Lord, addressed to a second person plural. The speech begins with a command to obey the law or instruction of Moses, who is described as a servant of the speaker, God. The *qatal*-form expresses the past reality of God's action; He commanded or appointed this law for all Israel.

Malachi 3:23a-24d

An asyndetic interjection marks the start of this unit as well (3:23a). The unit contains an unmarked direct speech by the Lord addressed to a second person plural. The asyndetic use of the exclamation הנה, plus the renominalization in the personal pronoun, make this unit stand out. Furthermore, the use of הנה plus a participle indicates an action that is just about to happen. Thus, the Lord announces his intention of quickly sending the prophet Elijah to a second person plural entity.[132] The advent of the prophet is to happen before the coming of the "day of the Lord." This day is described as great and fearful.

The mention of the "day of the Lord" by the Lord is significant and could be understood in two ways.[133] One way is to consider that the phrase was widely known and used in reference to the eschatological final day and would, therefore, be used here as a proper name.[134] Another option would be to see a distinction between the

131. Note the prominent position of the subject in the sentence היום הבא (the coming day). The natural sequence of the sentence should be: Verb, subject, object. But here we have: Verb, object, subject.
132. See discussion in 2:3 and 3:11 on the function of the preposition ל.
133. If the Lord is speaking and is referring to a day when he would come, one would expect "my day" instead of the "Day of the Lord."
134. Thus, saying "before the Day of the Lord" would be equivalent to saying "before Monday" or any other noun.

"Lords" mentioned, i.e., one "Lord" would be announcing the coming of the day of another "Lord."[135] The construction formed by interjection, first person marker, participle, preposition, second person marker, direct object marker, and noun appear here and in 2:3a. There, it serves to introduce impending judgment on the priests; here, it does the same for the nation.

A *w^eqatal*-form indicates the result of the imminent coming of "Elijah the prophet"; he would bring reconciliation (3:24a). Nonetheless, a conditional clause presents another possible scenario. A particle indicating a negative wish,[136] plus a modal *yiqtol*-form (3:24b), announce an alternative if reconciliation does not happen: the Lord would strike the land with a ban of destruction (3:24c).[137]

Implications of a Structure Based on the Syntax of the Text

The preceding discussion sought to study the syntax of text of the Book Malachi. As a result, 15 main textual units were identified and the relations among those units were established. The book of Malachi is formed by a heading (1:1a-b), a body divided into two main sections (1:2a-2:17i and 3:1a-21d) and a conclusion in 3:22a-24d.

Having established the structure of the text based on its syntax, we now arrive at some conclusions. These are very simple in nature but have the potential to deeply impact the way the text is approached and understood. First, the whole book of Malachi is discursive in nature. This simple fact mandates that the methods and techniques employed for study must be those appropriate for discursive texts.

Second, the text is represented from the perspective of the Lord. The TIA gives the character "God" control of the communication in the book. The TIA does not present "God" and "you" alternatively in dialogue. Rather, it is "God" who presents the arguments of other parties in the text.[138] Even in marked direct speeches by the Lord, it is the Lord who also introduces the responses of the other characters. Furthermore,

135. This is the way that New Testament writers understood and used this phrase. See, 2 Corinthians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.
136. Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2:635. פן is also identified as a negative particle because of its semantic function. See, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.13.
137. Here one verb governs a double accusative. The Lord will smite the land (DO) with a ban (means). See, Waltke and O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 175. Another alternative is to consider חרם as a nominal adjunct indicating the means of the verb phrase. See, Merwe, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 33.2.2.
138. See, for example, 1:6j-8h. Here there is a marked direct speech by the Lord (1:8h). But it is the Lord who introduces the marking of the direct speeches of the second person plural (1:6j, 1:7b, 1:7d).

the TIA generally introduces God, but at times allows God to speak directly to the TIR, especially towards the end of the book.

Third, as a direct result of the previous conclusion, and contrary to the common understanding of the book of Malachi, there is no real dialogue or interchange between characters in the book of Malachi. The labels “diatribe” or “disputation” do not seem to be the most adequate to describe the text. Perhaps the label “monologue” most closely describes what happens in the text.

Fourth, the text reveals a structure that somehow differs from the traditional ways it has been said to be structured. Allowing the text to reveal its structure is crucial for a proper understanding of its message. Texts should not be constrained and deformed by foreign structures imposed on them. Having a refined understanding of the sections of a text and the relation between those sections can empower the exegete.

Fifth, thematic and lexical analysis do serve to gain insights into the structure of texts, but are inherently limited for that purpose. In the case of Malachi, this type of studies produced an outline that is accurate to a great extent. It must be acknowledged nonetheless that a careful analysis of the syntax of a text brings clarity and more objectivity to the discussion. Not many studies in Malachi that are thematic or lexical in their approach propose a division of the text at 3:1a, 3:7a, or 3:16a. However, the syntax of the text demands a break at those points. It would be wise therefore to start the discussion of structure at the level of syntax and then proceed to the level of semantics. The syntax of the text should have the first say when determining its structure. As this type of study is applied to texts it might very well be the case that long-held assumptions about structures would have to be adapted to conform to what is revealed by the syntax of the text.

CHAPTER 3

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the semantic analysis of the book of Malachi and how semantic issues may affect the communication in Malachi. The previous chapter covered the syntax of the book of Malachi as a whole, its parts, and the relation between those parts. This analysis resulted in the identification of fifteen blocks in the book. Furthermore, direct speeches were also identified. This chapter deals with the content of those fifteen blocks from the point of view of semantics.

As was discussed in the introduction, semantic analysis deals with the study of the use of words and themes to convey meaning. Furthermore, the semantic analysis of a text involves several steps: first, to identify the semantic techniques used in each unit of a text, then, to notice the semantic lines in the text, and finally, to analyze the relation between these lines. This chapter will present the results of such a semantic analysis of the book of Malachi. Special attention will be given to the presence or absence of the semantics of blessing and cursing and how these are used to shape the message of the individual units and of the book as a whole.

Although the focus of this research is blessing and cursing and how this affects the communication in the book, this is only one of the semantic lines of the book. Therefore, this chapter explores all semantic lines in Malachi. In doing so, we will be able to determine how the semantics of blessing and cursing are used and how they affect the overall message of the book.

I distinguish nine semantic lines in the book of Malachi.[1] Some lines are very brief, and, no doubt, basically serve to support more substantive lines.[2] Those lines that appear in several blocks can be safely assumed to represent the semantic thrust of the book.[3]

A study of semantic lines, which takes into account the syntactical divisions of the text, helps to highlight some important things about semantics in Malachi. First, there

1. Nogalski identifies five main thematic elements: cultic abuse by priests and people, infertility of the land, the theodicy problem, the day of YHWH, and the ultimate fate of both YHWH's people and the nations. See, Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 1003. Petterson identifies three themes: covenant, priesthood and leadership, and the Day of Yahweh. See, Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 311. Redditt attempts to discuss common themes in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi, but basically ends up discussing themes in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The themes he identifies in Malachi are proper temple worship, God as refiner, divorce, God as king, Law and Prophets, and sin and punishment. See, Paul L. Redditt, "Themes in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi," *Interpretation* 61 (2007): 184–97.
2. Namely, love and hate, and the greatness of the Lord.
3. Boloje and Groenewald also see primary and secondary semantic issues in the text. For them the primary themes include the Day of Yahweh, covenant, temple worship, ministerial integrity, and the concern for justice. See, Boloje and Groenewald, "Literary Analysis of Covenant Themes in the Book of Malachi," 267. For Petterson, covenant and the Day of the Lord are central Biblical themes that are prominent in Malachi. See, Anthony Robert Petterson, "The Book of Malachi in Biblical Theological Context," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20 (2016): 10.

are only six semantic issues present both in the body and the conclusion of the book: relationships, covenant, messenger, blessings and curses, justice, and the day of the Lord. I consider these the main semantic issues in the book; the other lines serving to support them. Second, by the same token, and contrary to the opinion expressed by several scholars,[4] I do not consider liturgical aspects to constitute a main issue in the book. It is certainly an important issue, appearing frequently in the body of the book, but it is absent in its conclusion. Liturgy, therefore, although well represented in the body of the book, should carry less weight that other issues which are present both in the body and in the conclusion. Lastly, the semantic issue of blessing and cursing seems to be an effective means of bringing together other main semantic issues in the book.

The following is a graphic representation of the semantic lines in the text of Malachi.

Syntactic Outline		Semantic Lines								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1:1a-b	(heading)									
1:2a-5c	2 pl. addressee	●	●	●						
1:6a-2:9c	1 pl. speaker + 2 pl. addressee		●	●	●	●	●	●		
2:10a-16f	1 pl. speaker + 2 pl. addressee	●	●		●	●		●		
2:17a-h	2 pl. addressee								●	
3:1a-b	DS by God, non-marked						●			
3:1c-4a	2 pl. addressee				●	●	●			●
3:5a-d	DS by God, marked								●	
3:6a-d	DS by God, non-marked		●							
3:7a-12c	DS by God, marked				●	●		●		
3:13a-15d	DS by God, marked								●	
3:16a-18d	2 pl. addressee							●	●	
3:19a-21d	DS by God, marked								●	●
3:22a-c	DS God, non-marked					●			●	
3:23a-24d	DS God, non-marked		●				●	●		●

A – Love and Hate, B – Relationships, C – Greatness of the Lord, D – Liturgy, E – Covenant, F – Messenger, G – Blessing and Cursing, H – Justice, I – The day of the Lord

Figure 5 – Semantic lines in Malachi

This section will present and discuss the semantic lines in Malachi in the order they are introduced in the book. But before proceeding to the discussion of semantics lines, we will briefly analyze the heading of the book.

4. It was already mentioned, for example, that Nogalski and Reddit consider cultic abuse by priests and people and proper temple worship as main semantic themes in the book. See note number 1 above.

The first two clauses that serve as the heading of the book are too brief to significantly add to a discussion of semantic lines in the book. Nonetheless, they do introduce the book as a whole and thus we will attempt a brief semantic analysis of the heading by itself.

The book is labeled in 1:1a as a משׂא.[5] This term has been variously interpreted. Some see משׂא as having a condemnatory nuance representing a message of judgement,[6] "a prophetical speech of a threatening or minatory character."[7] Some even include the term in the semantic field of cursing.[8] For others משׂא indeed represents a message of judgement, but only for the enemies of God's people. Taking a slightly different approach, for some, when משׂא is used in connection with Judah/Israel, it designates "words of judgement and words of salvation."[9] Still others see משׂא as a tag, superscription, or technical term designating prophetical oracles.[10] This tag has been described as referring to a kind of prophetic book that is a "prophetic reinterpretation of a previous revelation."

This kind of book would present a rhetorical pattern with three elements: an assertion about YHWH's involvement in a historical situation, an allusion or reference to a previous revelation, and directions to follow.[11] Other scholars are adamant in rejecting משׂא as a genre tag.[12] Finally, some scholars interpret משׂא as simply a designation for prophetic revelation.[13]

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5. Other books in the collection of the Twelve are also identified as משׂא. See, Nahum 1:1 and Habakkuk 1:1. The term is also used in Hoshea 8:10 and Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1.
6. "In both Zechariah 9:1 and Malachi 1:1, the term maśśā' is closely related to words of judgement concerning foreign peoples." Karl William Weyde, "Once Again the Term Maśśā' in Zechariah 9:1; 12:1 and in Malachi 1:1: What Is Its Significance?," *Acta Theologica* 26 (2018): 264. See for example, 2 Kings 9:25, Isaiah 13:1. Nonetheless, this negative connotation does not seem to be present in the few instances the word is used in wisdom literature. See for example, Lamentations 2:14, 2 Chronicles 24:27.
7. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. massa'. See also, Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated*, 584.
8. See for example, Adam Robinson, "Abhorrence," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014).
9. Weyde, "Once Again the Term Maśśā' in Zechariah 9," 259.
10. Fanie Snyman, "A Theological Appraisal of the Book of Malachi," *Old Testament Essays* 27 (2014): 598.
11. Floyd, "The מַשָּׂא (Maśśā') as a Type of Prophetic Book," 409. This definition really adds nothing to the discussion since virtually all prophetic books could be said to constitute prophetic reinterpretations of previous revelations.
12. See, Mark J. Boda, "Freeing the Burden of Prophecy: Maśśā' and the Legitimacy of Prophecy in Zech 9-14," *Biblica* 87 (2006): 349–50.
13. Boda, 354–56. Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Inner-Biblical Allusion in Habakkuk's משא (Hab 1:1-2:20) and Utterances Concerning Babylon in Isaiah 13-23 (Isa 13:1-14:23; 21:1-10)," *Old Testament Essays* 31 (2018): 663.

Since the meaning of משׂא is contested, it is most reasonable to look at the context to find clues for the proper interpretation of the present passage. Clause 1:1b further qualifies the message to be presented in the book. The משׂא is also a דבר. These terms are not strictly synonyms but do have an isotopic relation, as both imply communication.[14] Thus, משׂא would imply a communicative act. The term דבר does not seem to indicate whether the communicative act is positive or negative. Thus, משׂא and דבר as used in the heading of the book of Malachi, seem to simply refer to prophetic revelation.[15] The interpretation of משׂא as a general designation for prophetic message is most appropriate, given not just the immediate context of 1:1b, but also the first unit and the first semantic line of the book, where the "love" that the Lord professes to Israel is contrasted to the humiliation of those he "hates."

Love and Hate

The first semantic line in the book of Malachi is the contrast between love and hate. For some, this theme is at the center of the book.[16] This is not so, given that the line is present only in two units of Malachi. Nevertheless, this line is closely connected to other semantic lines, such as relationship and covenant, that do stand at the core of the book.

The root אהב (to love) is used in units 1:2-5 and 2:10-16. In the first unit, it is used on three occasions, twice by the Lord (1:2a, 1:2g) and once by an unidentified second plural (1:2d). In the latter unit it is used in reference to a third singular (2:11d). The root שׂנא (to hate) is also used in units 1:2-5 and 2:10-16. In 1:3a it describes the Lord's relation toward Esau. In 2:16a it describes the relation between a third singular and divorce.[17]

Love (אהב) and hate (שׂנא) frequently appear as a word pair in the Hebrew Bible.[18] The words are considered antonyms. When used in the context of human relations, שׂנא

14. The phrase דבר־יהוה is also used in the heading of other books in the collection of the twelve. See, Hoshea 1:1, Joel 1:1, Jonah 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Haggai 1:1, and Zechariah 1:1. Besides the heading, the phrase is also used frequently in the text. See, Hoshea 4:1, Amos 3:1, 7:16, 8:12, Jonah 3:1, Zephaniah 2:5, Haggai 1:3, 2:1, 10, 20, Zechariah 1:7, 4:6, 8, 6:9, 7:1, 4, 8, 8:1, 18, 9:1, 11:11, and 12:1.
15. Snyman, "A Theological Appraisal of the Book of Malachi," 598.
16. Snyman says that the love of God for his people is the key theme, as it "serves as the foundation of all other prophetic words in the rest of the book." See, Fanie Snyman, "A Theological Appraisal of the Book of Malachi," *Old Testament Essays* 27, no. 2 (2014): 599.
17. Stokes proposes that שׂניתי in 3:6 is from the root שׂנא (hate) instead of שׂנה (change). The text would then read, "Since I the Lord have not hated [you], so you, sons of Jacob, have not been destroyed." Whether likely or not, the thought would fit well with semantics of love and hate in the book. See, Ryan E. Stokes, "I, Yhwh, Have Not 'Changed'? Reconsidering the Translation of Malachi 3:6; Lamentations 4:1; and Proverbs 24:21-22," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008): 264–76.
18. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, 220.

takes the meaning of "disliked", "loveless", or "rejected", while אהב takes the meaning of being "favored" or "preferred."[19] This word pair is present and used to describe human relations in unit 1:2-5. As we saw, the words are also present in 2:10-16, but do not function as a word pair there and do not address human relations.[20]

In unit 1:2-5, the semantics of אהב and שׂנא describe the relationship between the characters Lord, Jacob/Israel, and Esau/Edom. This semantic is used to indicate the special status of Jacob/Israel in the eyes of the Lord.[21] They are chosen and bound to the Lord in a special relationship.[22]

The Lord's choosing of Jacob over Esau is illustrated by a contrast. Two *wayyiqtol*-forms introduce events coming from Israelite traditions. The Lord's has loved Jacob (1:2g), as described in the Torah, but he has set Esau's mountains as a devastation (1:3b).[23] Wild animals inhabiting Esau's dwellings complete a picture of destruction (1:3c).[24]

The contrast between Jacob and Esau is further elaborated through images of construction and destruction. While Edom wants to rebuild (בנה), the Lord vows to tear down (הרס). These opposite actions are highlighted by the use of personal pronouns. In his speech, the Lord declares, "they themselves may build, but I myself will tear down" (1:4f-g). One last element emphasizing the contrast between Edom

19. Adam Robinson, Adam, "Abhorrence," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014). See also, Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), s.v. שׂנא. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated*, 556. See, for example, Gen 29:30-32.
20. There are parallel roots to אהב and שׂנא in the rest of the book, but they do not seem to serve to continue the theme of love and hate. To love is many times parallel to חפץ (to delight in, 1:10d, 2:17g, 3:1f, 12b), ירא (to fear, 2:5c, 3:5c, 16a, 20b), עבד (to serve, 1:6b, 3:14b, 17h, 18c, 18d), רצה (to be pleased, 1:8f, 10d, 13g), and הלך (to walk, 2:6c, 3:14e). To hate is many times parallel to תועבה (abomination, 2:11b), and בזה (to despise, 1:6i, 6j, 7e, 12d, 2:9a). See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. אהב. Robinson, Adam, "Abhorrence." Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. שׂנא. Jenni and Westermann, s.v. ירא.
21. Joachim J. Krause, "Tradition, History, and Our Story: Some Observations on Jacob and Esau in the Books of Obadiah and Malachi," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2008): 483.
22. The term אהב is many times interpreted as a covenantal formality. The present analysis views the term as descriptive of close interpersonal relations, as are those between parents and children. For a discussion of a similar understanding of אהב in the book of Deuteronomy, see Emmer Chacon, "El Uso de אָהֵב En Deuteronomio 10:12-22 Como Revelación del Carácter de Dios," *Theologika* 32 (2017): 38–50.
23. The *wayyiqtols* signal a change in the text from the discursive to the narrative world.
24. The Lord's hatred towards Esau/Edom has been identified as meaningful it and of itself, apart from God's choosing of Jacob/Israel. Furthermore, God's hatred is seen as directly stemming from Edom's actions towards Israel, as related by Obadiah. This is certainly plausible, and relevant from the perspective of seeing the Twelve as a literary unit. Nonetheless, the clear use of the word pair makes this nuance unlikely, in my opinion. See, Bob Wielenga, "The God Who Hates: The Significance of Esau/Edom in the Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology According to Malachi 1:2-5 with a Systematic Theological Postscript," *In die Skriflig* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6.

and Israel is the use of the word גבול (border). While Edom is to be known as a land (גבול) of wickedness (1:4h), Jacob is to testify that the Lord is great even beyond the territory (גבול) of Israel (1:5c).

In unit 2:10-16, the term אהב is used in 2:11d, while the term שׂנא is used in 2:16a. Both terms appear in a *qatal*-form, third masculine singular, and are somehow ambiguous as to who the subject of the verb is. Who loves in 2:11d? Who hates in 2:16a?

There are two third-masculine singulars who could serve as the subject of the relative clause having the verb אהב in 2:11d, Judah or the Lord (2:11c). Previously, in the text of Malachi, the Lord was twice the subject and once the referent in the three previous uses of the term. Here, it fits with the context to have the Lord as the subject. Judah does not seem to be "loving" the Lord. He has polluted his holiness. Furthermore, the noun immediately preceding the relative with cause אהב is the Lord, and so it would be more closely linked than Judah.[25]

The third masculine singular שׂנא in 2:16a translates as "he hates", but it has traditionally been attributed to the Lord and rendered as "I hate." The form here nonetheless is clearly not a first singular.[26] Moreover, שׂנא in 2:16a is part of a chain of three third masculine singular verbs in 2:15f-16c which has baffled translators and commentators.[27] How do these verbs relate to one another? Another source of uncertainty is that personal pronouns markers are used in seemingly erratic patterns in the subunit 2:15e-16f. There are second plurals in 2:15e and 2:16e, a second singular in 2:15f, and third singulars in 2:15f, and 2:16a, c, f.

It would seem logical to assume that all third masculine singular verbal forms in 2:15f-16c have the same subject. Nonetheless, this results in some very unpalatable readings. If we take the Lord to be the subject of the verbs, we read "he hates divorce" (2:16a), but also, "he should not be treacherous to the wife of your youth" (2:15f) and "he should not cover his garment with violence" (2:16c). Two of these readings are quite unsatisfactory. On the other hand, if we take the second plural to be the subject of all verbs, then we read, "you should not be treacherous to the wife of your youth"

25. Also note that the Lord is presented in the Hebrew Bible as loving righteousness and justice (Psalm 11:7, 33:5, 37:28, 45:8, Isaiah 61:8), which would appear to be semantically close to holiness.
26. The first masculine singular form of שׂנא appears in 1:3a, "I hate." But that is not the form being used here.
27. Commentators usually assume textual corruption or claim that irregular grammar is being used. See, Markus Zehnder, "A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13-16," *Vetus Testamentum* 53 (2003): 236. Another option proposed is to take the third singulars as impersonal: people hate, cover with violence, etc. See, Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 70. See also, David Clyde Jones, "A Note on the LXX of Malachi 2:16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 683–85.

(2:15f), "you hate divorce" (2:16a), and "you should not cover his garment with violence" (2:16c). These readings are much more agreeable, but the text is plain in stating that the second plural is "loving", rather than "hating", divorce. Furthermore, if we take the third singulars to be a general reference and so refer to "people", then we have the readings, "people should not be treacherous to the wife of your youth" (2:15f), "people hate divorce" (2:16a), and "people should not cover their garments with violence" (2:16c). Again, we have at least the difficulty with people hating divorce, as the text does not seem to indicate this, but rather the opposite. It thus seems that translating all third singular verbal forms in the same way does not give a satisfactory reading. But is there any reason in the text to translate similar forms in different ways? Who does שׂנא in 2:16a refer to? As usual, the syntax of the text illuminates the way to interpret it.

The parallelism between clauses clarifies the use of the personal pronouns. Clauses 2:15ef are parallel to clauses 216ef. In both cases we have a fronted *w^e^qatal* followed by a last position *yiqtol*. Also, clause 2:15e (ונשׁמרתם ברוחכם) is parallel to clause 2:16e (ונשׁמרתם ברוחכם), both having *w^e^qatal*-forms and second plurals. Furthermore, clause 2:15f (ובאשׁת נעוריך אל־יבגד) is parallel to 2:16f (ולא תבגדו) both having a negation and *yiqtol*-forms. The parallelisms show that the second masculine singular [wife of your youth] and the third masculine singular [he should not act treacherously] in 2:15f in fact refer to a second plural [you should not act treacherously] as in the parallel clause (2:16f). As in 2:14c-e, the singulars are used to communicate intimacy and closeness, but the speeches are addressed to a second plural.

The presence of an embedded speech in 2:16ab clarifies that not all three masculine singulars need to be translated in the same way, since they are on different syntactical levels. Verses 2:15e-f, 2:16c and 2:16e-f form a direct speech. This speech is marked in 2:16d by the usual direct discourse marker in the book (אמר יהוה צבאות) and uses *w^e^qatal*-forms.[28] Clause 2:16a nonetheless constitutes an embedded speech that uses a *qatal*-form and is marked by 2:16b. This discourse marker is used only here in the book (אמר יהוה אלהי ישׂראל). Clause 2:16c continues the direct speech that started in 2:15ef and so the singular masculine there also refers to a masculine plural, as in 2:15f. The embedded speech has grammar and syntax that is independent from the grammar and syntax of the surrounding speech.

The difficulty with the third masculine singular verbal forms in 2:15f, 2:16a, and 2:16c is solved once we recognize how the personal pronouns are used and notice the

28. The *yiqtol*-forms in 2:15f and 2:16f are subordinate to the *w^e^qatal*-forms in 2:15e and 2:16e respectively. They only serve to give force to the prohibition.

presence of an embedded speech in 2:16ab. The third masculine singulars in 2:15f [he should not act treacherously] and 2:16c [he covers violence upon his garment] need to be understood as a personal or intimate appeal, directed towards a hypothetical second singular, which in turn represents the second person plural addressed in the speech. Furthermore, these considerations also explain the negative sense present in clause 2:16c. There is no negative form in the text of 2:16c, but it is carried over from 2:15f. Therefore, the text is translated as, "you should *not* cover violence."[29]

The result of this discussion is that the third masculine singular *qatal*-form in 2:16a refers to the Lord, as was also the case in 2:11d.[30] In the text of Malachi, only the character "Lord" is presented as "loving" and "hating." Despite the Lord being the subject of all other instances of שלח in the book (2:2, 2:4, 3:1, 3:23), here he is in opposition to the "sending" since it involves the breaking of faith.

In unit 2:10-16 the semantics of love and hate are connected to the character "Lord" but do not have the same function as in 1:2-5. Here, these semantics do not describe relationships to human characters, but serve to illustrate the Lord's attitude towards the concepts of holiness and divorce. There is no technical sense here of "choosing" holiness or "rejecting" divorce. The words are used in their simplest sense to indicate pleasure or displeasure.

Relationships

There are a number of terms used to describe relations between two or more humans. People can be identified as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, spouse, friend, and so on. In the book of Malachi several human relations are discussed. These relationships are used as symbolic representations of God's relation to his people. The focus of this semantic line is on the humanness of the relation. Sometimes, a relationship may be used to illustrate a divine-human relation but that is not the focus of the semantics. In other words, God may appear as one of the partners of a human relation, but this language is not meant to define the divine, it is rather used to illustrate a point.

Brothers

The first relation introduced in the book of Malachi is that of brothers. The term אח is used in 1:2e and 2:10c. A rhetorical question in 1:2e introduces the characters Jacob and

29. The phrase, "covering your garment with violence," may be compared to similar expressions in Psalm 73:6 and Isaiah 59:6, that describe "divorce" as "wickedness," something done by those who displease God. See, Ogden and Deutsch, *Joel & Malachi*, 98.
30. I agree with the opinion of Merrill when he says that "the phrase in question could be taken as an indirect, and not direct, quotation. Malachi would then be the speaker: 'YHWH the God of Israel says that He hates divorce'." Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary*, 367.

Esau as brothers. The expected positive response serves to present the brothers as equals in the text. Nonetheless, the word pair love-hate (1:2g-1:3a) and semantics of construction and destruction (1:4fg) are used to make a contrast between Jacob and Esau.

The root אח is reintroduced in 2:10c. Here a common plural identifies itself as part of a brotherhood. As in 1:2e, rhetorical questions are used to present all brothers as equals in the text (2:10ab). All are assumed to have been created by the same God and Father. Also as in 1:2-5, a distinction is introduced between the brothers by means of semantics of cursing (2:12a-c).

The identity of the first plural is not explicit in the text, but it is obviously formed by brothers who share the same father. Who are these brothers? It is unlikely that these brothers refer to Jacob and Esau, the brothers mentioned in the first unit of the book (1:2-5). Only Jacob is chosen there, while here both brothers are part of the same covenant (2:10d). It is also unlikely that it refers to the Levites or the Priests, as the accusations leveled in the second unit of the book (1:6-2:9) are absent here. Given the references to Judah (2:11a), Jerusalem (2:11b), Israel (2:11b), and Jacob (2:12b), it would seem best to see the first-person plural as a collective designation for the people of God in Judea. This identification is reinforced by the parallelism between the brothers and Judah. As the brothers act unfaithfully (בגד) to one another (2:10c) and pollute (חלל) the covenant of the fathers (2:10d), Judah (2:11a) acts unfaithfully (בגד) and pollutes (חלל) the holiness of the Lord (2:11c).

The semantics of brotherhood serve to illustrate how the Lord relates to humans. God is not a brother in the text. The brothers refer to humans who are equals and expected to remain united and loyal to one another. The image of brotherhood is used to create a sense of equality. But the way in which the characters, presented as brothers in the text, relate to the character Lord, introduces a distinction among brothers. In other words, the relation between brothers and the character Lord is the distinguishing factor among people who are otherwise equal. In the case of Jacob and Esau, the choosing of Jacob by the Lord created a distinction and separation from Esau. In the case of the first plural, unfaithfulness to one another results in unfaithfulness to the Lord, which in turn results in the condemnation of part of the first plural. The end result is the same. There is a distinction and separation among brothers, based on how they relate to the Lord.

Fathers and Sons

The relation between fathers and sons is introduced in 1:6a and continues to be used until the end of the book. The root בן used in 1:6a, 3:3c, 3:6c, 3:17g, and 3:24ab. The root אב is used in 1:6a, 1:6c, 2:10a, 2:10d, 3:7a, and 3:24ab.

The initial use in 1:6a establishes the first axiom that gives meaning to the relationship in the book: sons (בן) honor (כבד) their fathers (אב). So, whether motivated internally by an inner desire, or externally by the expectations of society, a son is presented as inclined to give honor to the father. This expectation is in line with traditional values and with the foundational principles of Israelite society, as presented in the Decalogue.[31]

The second axiom that gives meaning to the relationship between a father and a son in Malachi is presented in 3:17f-h: fathers (אב) spare (חמל) faithful sons (בן). Unlike the first axiom, there is a condition here. While all sons are expected to honor all fathers, here the text does not expect all fathers to spare all sons, but only those who serve (עבד). This is so because of the unification of the roles of father (אב) and master (אדון) and of son (בן) and servant (עבד). This unification was already present in the text since the parallelisms in 1:6a-f had already equated son and father (1:6a) to servant and master (1:6b). Furthermore, to honor (כבד) in 1:6d and to fear (ירא) in 1:6f, had also been equated.[32] So here in 3:17f-h, a father who is a master only spares a son who is also a servant.

While presenting these two axiomatic declarations, the text uses singular forms for son (בן) and father (אב). All other occurrences of these terms in the book are in the plural. Apparently, the singular is being used to present general principles and the plural is used to present elaborations or examples of the principles.

The first characters to be presented in a father-son relationship are the Lord and the priests. A superficial reading seems to portray the Lord introducing himself as a father in the text of Malachi. But the construction in 1:6c is conditional (אם) and does not constitute an assertion. Rather, the Lord takes up and challenges a commonly held belief of the people.

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31. The fifth commandment is an order to honor (כבד) the parents, father (אב) and mother (אם). See, Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. In Malachi, there is no mention of mothers.
32. The term used in 1:6f is the noun מורא from the root ירא. The terms כבד and ירא are not synonyms, but do have an isotopic relationship. Honor and fear present clear semantic differences, but also reveal marked similarities. Both verbs can be understood in negative or positive ways. כבד could mean to be heavy negatively, or to be honored positively. Similarly, ירא could mean to dread negatively or to feel awe positively. Furthermore, to honor and to fear have a similar semantic value, in the sense that there is a close relation between a cultic fearing of God and honoring God. See, Swanson, James, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), s.v. ירא. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. ירא. Gregory R. Lanier, "Glory," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014). Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. כבד.

The semantics of the greatness of the Lord, which we will analyze further on in the text, is closely connected to the semantic of God as a father. The priests, who are contrasted to sons, are charged with not honoring (כבד) and fearing (ירא) the name (שם) of the Lord. These are terms also used in the semantics of the greatness of the Lord.

The Lord is also presented in a father-son relationship in 2:10. The morphology of the rhetorical question (הלוא) is identical to that in 1:2e and creates a link to semantics of relationships there.[33] The use of the rhetorical questions itself indirectly confirms a focus on relations as a question implies one entity relating to another. In this case the son is a first plural, referring to the people of Judah. It is this first plural that openly introduces the Lord as a father in Malachi. The parallelism between "one father" (אב אחד) in 2:10a and "one God" (אל אחד) in 2:10b makes this clear. It is this assertion that the Lord takes up and challenges in 1:6c. If he is indeed a father, as the people say, then he expects honor.

The Lord is described by the first plural as father (2:10a) and creator (2:10b) of them all. In this way the description of the Lord in the text augments from father, master, and great king to creator. The children are presented as polluting the holiness of their divine father.

A last portrait of God as a father is introduced in 3:17f-h. As in 1:6c, the Lord compares himself to a father. There he used the comparison to explain his expectation of receiving honor. Here he uses the comparison to explain his giving of mercy and protection. The sons are those in the text who appropriately respond to the Lord, by honoring-fearing him. Those who will eventually be spared by the Lord are described in 3:16a and 3:16e as those who fear (ירא) the Lord.

The semantics of a father-son relationship is also used in the text to refer to normal human father to human son relations. In fact, this is always the focus of the text. The Lord can only be compared to a father because there are tangible relationships between tangible fathers and sons, involving tangible duties and privileges. It is the reality and the experience of these relations that make it possible to present the divine as a father figure.

The first reference to human fathers is in 2:10d. Here the fathers can be identified only in relation to the sons. These sons, a first plural that we have identified as the

33. Units 1:2-5 and 2:10-16 have been recognized as having parallel themes of father-son relationships and love and hate terminology. See for example, Elie Assis, "Love, Hate and Self-Identity in Malachi: A New Perspective to Mal 1:1-5 and 2:10-16," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 35 (2009): 109–20. This study correctly identifies parallels between these two units of Malachi. Nevertheless, the author's interpretation of the people's supposed ideologies is very creative, but equally unconvincing.

inhabitants of Judah, are also presented as brothers. As we already saw, the brothers are sons of one father and God. But they are also sons of the fathers, a generic reference to the patriarchs, some of which will be identified further on in the text. These brothers are presented as being unfaithful to one another (2:10c) and in doing so, polluting the covenant of their fathers (2:10d), and eventually polluting the holiness of the Lord (2:11c).

Here we begin to see aspects that will be elaborated in other semantic lines. First, there is a transition from a divine father, whose holiness is polluted by his sons, to human fathers, whose covenant is polluted by their sons. Second, there is also a relation between social aspects, such as the breaking of faith between brothers, and the brothers with their fathers, and liturgical aspects, such as the polluting of the holiness of the Lord. This interconnection of vertical (human-divine) and horizontal (human-human) relations will mark much of the rest of the book. The break of a proper relation to the divine is showed to spill into the break of proper relations between humans. Similarly, broken relations between humans will impede proper relations with the divine.

The first patriarch presented as a father figure in Malachi is Levi (3:3c). He is introduced as the father of those who will be purified and refined by the messenger of the covenant. The sons are not identified, but are to be understood as the priests. The two previous uses of the term Levi are in the context of speeches addressed to the priests. In 2:4b a commandment (המצוה הזאת) is sent to a second plural to make possible the permanence of the covenant with Levi (2:4c). In 2:1b the priests are identified as the second plural who received the commandment (המצוה הזאת) of 2:1a. Furthermore, in 2:8b a second plural is charged with making many fall by their teaching (תורה), thus ruining the covenant of Levi (2:8c). This is presented in contrast to an ideal priest (2:7a) whose teaching (תורה) is sought by people. The identification of the priests as the sons of Levi is also strengthened by noticing the use of the terms נגשׁ (offer) and מנחה (offering). The result of the cleansing of the sons of Levi is that they are able to offer (נגשׁ) offerings (מנחה) in righteousness. Furthermore, the priests have been previously charged with offering (נגשׁ) improper sacrifices to the Lord (1:7a, 1:8a, 1:8c) and their offerings (מנחה) are described as not pleasing the Lord (1:10f, 1:13fg). The relationship between the father, Levi, and the sons, the priests, is a broken one. Their actions do not honor their father.[34]

34. Priests are portrayed in a general negative light in Malachi. However, some elements of social justice and refinement do appear in the book. See, Mark J. Boda, "Perspectives on Priests in Haggai-Malachi," in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 13–33.

The patriarch Jacob is also presented as a father figure (3:6c). As in the case of Levi, the sons are not identified in the text. The phrase בני־יעקב is used only here in Malachi, but it is a fairly common designation for the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible.[35] The challenge of 2:17h called into question the existence of a sovereign God. Here, by using a very forceful syntactical construction, the Lord declares his immutability as the only reason for the existence of Israel.[36] In this way the Lord climaxes his reply and rebuttal, which started in 3:1a. The Israelites are children of Jacob, but ultimately, they are children of God, and it is because of his unending nature (שׁנה) that they have not reached their end (כלה).

Clause 3:7a presents the Israelites as departing (סור) from the Lord's statutes (חק) and not keeping (שׁמר) them since the days (יום) of their fathers (אב). Here the fathers would refer to all patriarchs, as in 2:10d; this would include Jacob, Levi, and Judah, who have been introduced by name in the text. The sons of Jacob are portrayed just like the sons of Levi, the priests. They also departed (סור in 2:8a) and did not keep (שׁמר in 2:9b) the ways of the Lord. The days of the fathers do not refer to the eschatological day, but to the ancient days, as in 3:4a. Thus, we see in the text that times past are associated both to faithfulness, as in the case of Levi (2:5a-c), and to unfaithfulness, as in the case of Judah (2:11a-c). Here, nonetheless, the emphasis is on the unfaithfulness of the sons.

Clauses 2:15c-d may be seen as a veiled reference to the people of Judah, as fathers who disregard the obligation to their children. The זרע (seed) of אלהים (God) may refer to the sons of Judean men and their, now abandoned, Judean wives. It may be that because of the treachery of the men in marrying foreign women, there was no concern for the children of their former wives.[37] In 2:3a, the Lord threatens the seed of the priests. If זרע in 2:15d is seen as indicating human descendants, this would add weight to the argument that it is also human descendants who are in view in 2:3a, and not just crops or harvest. If this interpretation is correct, this would be the only instance in the text where the addressees of a speech are presented as fathers. They are otherwise always presented as sons.

35. The phrase is used in Genesis 34:13, 25, 27, 35:5, 22, 26, 46:26, 49:2, 1 Kings 18:31, 2 Kings 17:34, 1 Chronicles 16:13, Psalm 77:16, 105:6. If only the immediate literary context of Malachi is to be taken into account, the phrase could be seen as a reference to Levi and Judah, the only sons of Jacob mentioned by name. As we saw, Levi is to be associated with the priests and Judah is to be associated with the inhabitants of Judea.
36. The use of the first singular personal pronoun, plus the frontal position of the noun "Lord," is quite emphatic. Similarly, the use of the second plural personal pronoun, plus the fronted noun "sons of Jacob," serves to give emphasis.
37. Besides a physical search, בקשׁ can also denote an emotion, and thus be rendered as "to strive after something, be busy, be concerned." See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. בקשׁ.

The book ends with the possibility of total restoration in the father-son relationship. Elijah the prophet is charged with making the hearts of fathers turn (שׁוּב) to the hearts of sons, and the hearts of sons turn (שׁוּב) to the hearts of their fathers (3:24ab).[38] Elijah as a messenger is doing what Levi did when he turned (שׁוּב) many from evil (2:6). Furthermore, through the ministry of Elijah, the Lord takes an active role in helping the call of 3:7c-g to materialize. It was there where the emotional call was first given for sons to turn (שׁוּב) to the Lord, who has been identified as the one father and creator of his people.[39]

The use of the plural for sons and fathers is meant to give a vision of the possibility of all father-son relationships in the text being restored.[40] A literal reconciliation between human children and human fathers would serve to bring social healing and restoration.[41] Nonetheless, the use of the term heart (לב) seems to indicate that the human-divine relationship is especially in sight.[42] This term was only used before in 2:2b, when the priests are called to honor God's name.[43]

The father-son relationship is used to illustrate the relationship between God and people. The image is not meant to present God as a literal father who has literal children. Rather, the relation is used to explain why God expects, and deserves, to be feared and honored. The relation also explains why the Lord blesses, particularly in the last day, those who serve him. Furthermore, the text presents that, contrary to nature, instead of being honored by people, the Lord purifies people so they can serve him (3:3c). Also, instead of sparing the obedient son, the Lord spares the disobedient one (3:6c). The Lord does not wait for people to conform to their own accepted standards of father-son relations, he offers to make it happen 3:24ab.

38. For a discussion of the development of the idea of Elijah as a reconciler of fathers and sons and its connection to covenantal reconciliation, see, B. J. Koet, "Elijah as Reconciler of Father and Son: From 1 Kings 16:34 and Malachi 3:22-24 to Ben Sira 48:1-11 and Luke 1:13-17," in *Rewriting Biblical History. Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes*, ed. J. Corley and H.W.M. van Grol, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 7 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 173–90.
39. This unit uses three imperatives, evidencing the use of emotional tension as a rhetorical device. The Lord issues calls to return to him (3:7c), bring all the tithes (3:10a), and to try him (3:10c).
40. The covenant of the fathers is honored. The children of the Jewish wives, previously distanced from their fathers because of the foreign wives and their children, would now be united with their fathers. The children of foreign wives, the daughters of foreign gods, would now become children of the Lord, as they are united to their fathers.
41. Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Siphrut (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 345.
42. Caryn A. Reeder, "Malachi 3:24 and the Eschatological Restoration of the 'Family,'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007): 704.
43. Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," 212–14.

Fathers and Daughters

The relation between fathers and daughters is also present in the text. The term בת (daughter) appears only once in the text (2:11e). But given the abundant references to sons, it is worth examining. This relationship is approached from the angle of a divine father with a human daughter. Given that the phrase "daughter of a foreign god" (בת אל נכר) is used only here in the Hebrew Bible, and that even the phrase "daughter of God" is used nowhere else, the meaning of the phrase should be interpreted in light of the context. In the greater context of the Hebrew Bible, Zion and Jerusalem are identified as daughters, presumably of the God of Israel.[44] Likewise, pagan nations are also described as daughters, presumably of their gods.[45] So there is a precedent for using the designation daughter, to describe the connection between people and their deity. In the specific context of the book of Malachi, God has compared himself to a father (1:6c, 3:17g) and the descendants of Jacob have identified him as their father (2:10b) and themselves as his sons (2:10a). So, it would seem natural to see female Israelites as daughters of YHWH,[46] and to take the phrase "daughter of a foreign god" to mean a woman who serves or worships a god other than YHWH.[47]

The action of marrying an outsider to the covenant community is seen as both the breaking of faith to the fathers of eligible Judean girls (2:10cd) and the breaking of faith to the Judean wife (2:14c-e).[48] The first recounting of the breaking of faith is very male-centered. The offense is not so much against Judean unmarried girls, but against their fathers. The action is seen as perhaps depriving the parents of the honor and income of marrying the daughters. The second recounting of the breaking of faith is presented more from a female perspective. After probably passing the peak of their productivity both, in terms of labor and childbearing, the wives of the youth are being neglected.

Some may sense a male-centered bias in the text against women since the text does not specifically mention Judean women as daughters of God. Thus, men are sons of God, but women are daughters of foreign gods. A closer look does not seem to reveal

44. See for example, Isaiah 37:22.
45. See for example, Jeremiah 51:33.
46. See Ben Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," 284.
47. Zehnder, "A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13-16," 225–28. By identifying the phrase בת־אל נכר (daughter of a foreign god) as a pun on בתואל בן נחור (Bethuel son of Nachor) from the narrative in Genesis 24, Lear also concludes that the phrase refers to a foreign woman who worships a foreign god. See Sheree E. Lear, "The Daughter of a Foreign God: Wordplay as an Interpretive Key in Malachi 2:11," *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015): 467–73.
48. This study focusses solely on the text of Malachi and is therefore unconcerned with diachronic considerations. Nonetheless, the reader may find of interest possible connections to the events described in Nehemiah 10:30, 13:23, 27.

that. When identifying the Lord as their father and themselves as their sons (2:10ab), the men of Judah use the term אל (god) and not the very frequent יהוה צבאות (Lord of hosts). The use of בת אל נכר (daughter of a foreign god) would then just be a necessity of the language to describe just that, a woman who serves a god other than the Lord. The terms son or daughter are used to match the gender of the people being described. The references are to men who worship יהוה and women who do not. There seems to be no difference between father-son and father-daughter relationships in the content of the relationship and how these are described.

Husbands and Wives

The term אשה, woman or wife, is used in 2:14c, 2:14e, and 2:15f and the relation between husbands and wives is central to unit 2:10a-16f. The first reference to this relation, though, does not use the term wife (אשה), but the isotope daughter (בת). The phrase בת־אל נכר (daughter of a foreign God), in 2:11e, appears at the end of a series of clause pairs. Clauses 2:10a and 2:10b establish a parallelism that will carry until 2:11d. Every clause pair presents the same idea in slightly different terms: To have one father (2:10a) is to have one creator (2:10b); to act treacherously towards a brother (2:10c) is to pollute the covenant of the fathers (2:10d); to act treacherously (2:11ab) is to pollute the holiness of the Lord (2:11cd). Clause 2:11e breaks this pattern of clause pairs. It also introduces one unambiguous action that is meant to exemplify both social treachery and cultic polluting: the taking of a foreign wife.[49]

The next use of the semantics of relation between husbands and wives appears in the context of the divine reasons for the strong message of judgement of 2:12a-c. As was mentioned in the syntactical analysis of 2:10a-2:16f,[50] the answer to the question in 2:14b concerns not just the preceding clauses, describing the second thing the people do that offends the Lord (2:13a-d), but the whole unit thus far. The people are accused of, first, uniting themselves to pagans, and second, crying because their gifts are not accepted while they are still united to pagans.[51] The answer to the why (על כי) there is no divine favor in the face of these two offences has to do with the relations between husbands and wives (2:14c). Thus, this semantic theme serves to unify the block 2:10a-2:16f.

The Lord is introduced in 2:14c as one who testifies between a second singular and the wife of his youth (אשת נעוריך). The second person singular is accused of being unfaithful

49. The actions presented in the parallel clauses, acting treacherously and polluting, can be seen as general or ambiguous. But the clause that breaks the pattern is quite specific, marrying a foreign woman.
50. See page 66.
51. It has also been suggested that the tears on God's altar represent some pagan practice or the tears of the abandoned Israelite wives. See, Zehnder, "A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13-16," 232–33.

(בגד) to his wife (2:14d). The construction formed by בגד plus a particle ב, having a third feminine singular suffix, is found only here, Exodus 21:8, and Lamentations 1:2. Besides, in Malachi, both passages carry the sense of letting down, or somehow falling short of a promise or commitment. The analogy to the Exodus passage seems to be particularly illuminating. There, a slave woman is offered protection in case her husband/owner acts treacherously (בגד) against her. She cannot be sold to foreigners (נכר) but must be redeemed, i.e., be taken care of by her own people. In contrast, Malachi presents men acting treacherously (בגד) against the wives of their youth (2:14d), who are free and not slaves, and taking foreigners (נכר) instead (2:11e).

The wife is further described as a חברת (consort) and the wife of the second singular's covenant (אשת בריתך) in 2:14e. The speech is clearly addressed to a second plural, but the singulars are being used to indicated intimacy and closeness. By using the terms consort and covenant the text emphasizes the unity between a man and the wife of his youth. This stands in contrast to the union of the man of the wife of a foreign god. Of that union the text declares, they are not one (אחד) and there is no spirit (רוח) in their union (2:15ab).[52] Noticing the use of אחד in 2:10, which refers to the Lord, many translate 2:15 as also referring to the Lord. For example, the NIV reads, "has not the one God made you?" But there are at least two objections to this translation. First, the syntax of the text indicates the presence of a statement and not a question. Second, the normal order for a verbal clause is verb then object, but here the object is highlighted by appearing before the verb. We should thus read, "but one he has not made." The "one" would refer to the union of a man and a foreign woman. The "he" would refer to the Lord, meaning that God did not bless the union of a Judean/Israeli man and a daughter of a foreign God. Clause 2:15b is nominal and carries the negative from 2:15a.[53] We should thus read, "there is no remnant of spirit to it." The third personal singular, rendered in this case with a neutral "it," would refer to the manmade union of the man and the foreign woman, meaning God did not breathe life to that union. I therefore translate 2:15a-b as, "but one he did not make and there is no remnant of spirit to it." [54]

Subunit 2:15e-16f begins and ends with the construction *w^eqatal* plus *yiqtol* (2:15e-f, 2:16e-f), which indicates a concluding statement.[55] The repetition is not just in terms of syntax. The ideas of keeping the spirit (רוח) and not acting unfaithfully (בגד) also appear twice. Both these terms are used exclusively in connection with the husband-wife relation and thus put this semantic as the main element of the conclusion of the

52. Given the difficulties in the text, Zehnder proposes several possible emendations. Zehnder, 243–44.
53. In 2:16c we see another example of a negative being carried from a previous clause (2:15f).
54. For Wendland, 2:15 is one of the most difficult texts in the Hebrew Bible to interpret. He proposes a different interpretation to the one here. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 358.
55. The same construction marks the conclusion of the unit 1:2a-5c.

subunit. Since the Lord did not make one and did not give spirit (רוח) to the union between the Judean men and their pagan wives, the men are now called to keep their spirit (רוח) and to be faithful (בגד) to their original wives. Inserted in the middle of this double conclusion, clause 2:16c presents a call for the second plural not to cover (כסה) violence upon (על) their garments (לבוש).[56] The construction על plus לבוש is used elsewhere only in 2 Samuel 1:24 and Psalm 22:18. In both cases, it refers to literally placing something upon a garment. Thus, the phrase can be interpreted to indicate a graphic depiction of violence. This highlights even more the hypocritical attitude of the second plural, previously described as covering (כסה) the altar of the Lord with tears and wondering why he would not accept their offering (2:13b). Heeding the directive to keeping the spirit and not acting unfaithfully would avert the practice of unjustified divorce, which the Lord hates.[57]

An additional feature of the semantics of relationships between husbands and wives is the brief but significant portrayal of Judah as a feminine character, a female who acts unfaithfully, presumably, against the Lord (בָּגְדָה in 2:11a).[58] This is significant, since the Hebrew Scriptures frequently present God as husband and his people as wife, and the time of her youth as the time of faithful covenant relationship.[59] The feminine portrayal of Judah would then create a secondary narrative about Judah as an unfaithful wife.[60] As a male, Judah is presented as acting unfaithfully (2:14d) towards the wife of his youth (2:14c), the wife of his covenant (2:14e). As a female, Judah would then be an unfaithful wife, acting wrongfully against the husband of her youth, the husband of her covenant, the Lord.

The feminine portrayal of Judah not only redefines the character's actions, but also the way the Lord relates to her. In the same way God hates Judean men divorcing their Judean wives and breaking their marriage covenant with them by marrying foreign wives, the Lord also hates having to divorce Judah because of her unfaithfulness and her breaking of the covenant. Perhaps the positive portrayal of other nations in Malachi is somehow related to this negative portrayal of his Judean wife. Painful as it is, the Lord may divorce his covenant wife and seek a more suitable partner. This portrayal makes the Lord's appeal to keeping the spirit and not breaking faith all the more significant.

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56. For the discussion of the syntax of 2:15e-16f and the uses of singulars and plurals, see the section dealing with "Love and Hate," on pages 90-96.
57. See, Roy E. Gane, "Old Testament Principles Relating to Divorce and Remarriage," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12 (2001): 37.
58. The gender of Judah shifts in the immediate context. She acts unfaithfully as female (2:11a), but pollutes (2:11c) and marries (2:11e) as male.
59. Julia M. O'Brien, "Judah as Wife and Husband: Deconstructing Gender in Malachi," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 245–46.
60. Ben Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," 286.

Some have considered that the feminine portrayal of Judah means that God is eventually feminized as wife in the text.[61] The situation is seen as not about literal husbands and literal wives, but about Judah as husband and the Lord as wife. This is not so. Rather the double portrayal of husbands and wives serves to add meaning and depth to the description of relationships in Malachi. Judah as wife has been unfaithful to the Lord. Judah as husband has been unfaithful to Judean wives. This constitutes a brief but interesting twist in Malachi, but one according to established prophetic traditions.

The relation between husbands and wives is then used in parallel tracks in the book of Malachi. The relation is used to further illustrate how divine-human and human-human relations are interconnected and interdependent. The marrying of pagan wives is connected to the liturgical offenses of polluting the covenant of the fathers and the holiness of God, as well as the social offense of being unfaithful to their brothers. The abandoning of the Judean wives is connected to the liturgical offense of not looking after the seed of God and being unfaithful to him, as well as the social offense of being unfaithful to the marriage promise. It must be noted that the text is presented from a patricentric angle. The wronged women are not addressed, and their words are not present in the text.[62] Furthermore, despite the many references to fathers, sons, brothers, daughters, and wives, there is no open mention of mothers in the text of Malachi.

Masters and Servants

The relation between servants and masters is present in the text through the terms עבד (servant) in 1:6b, 3:14b, 3:17h, 3:18c-d, 3:22a, and אדון (master) in 1:6b, 1:12c, 1:14d, 3:1c. This relation is closely linked to that between fathers and sons, as the parallelisms in 1:6a-f make clear. Sons and fathers (1:6a) are parallel to servants and masters (1:6b). This does not mean that son and servant and father and lord are synonyms. There are clear differences: the father-son relation deals with the family sphere, the master-servant deals with the social sphere. The father-son relation is natural, the master-servant is manmade. The father-son relation is generally perceived as positive, the master-servant could many times be perceived in a negative way. Nonetheless, a clear isotopic relation can be established between son and servant and father and lord.

61. See for example, O'Brien, "Judah as Wife and Husband," 249.
62. Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript," 7–8.

Servants, as well as sons, are expected to give honor. The same verb, כבד (to give honor), governs both clauses (1:6ab). This reveals a positive expectation about the relationship between a servant and a lord in the text. The servant is not seen as oppressed and resentful, but rather as one who would, in fact, honor his lord. Thus, although son and servant denote a subordinate relation with father and master, there is a positive expectation in regard to both relations. There is no immediate indication in the text as to what is the way for honor to be rendered by son and servant. That is determined by examining the many ways in which dishonor is given as elaborated from בזה (to despise) and parallel roots (1:6i).

The parallelism is presented a second time in regard to the dominant partner in the relation; the same conditional construction is used in regard to a father (1:6c) and a master (1:6e).[63] The father is the dominant partner in the family sphere. The father serves as the visible head and leader of the family. The traditional values of a spiritual leader, as well as of a provider, are implicit in the expectation that honor is due to the father. There is an expectation of honor because there is an expectation that the father is honorable. In the case of the lord, he is the dominant partner in the sphere of society. As in the case of the father, there seems to be a positive expectation in the text. Granted, ירא can also mean to feel dread or terror,[64] but the parallel association with father and son would make this meaning highly improbable.

The positive associations in the relationships of son and father and lord and servant are elucidated, once the Lord is identified as father and master. Truly to be son and servant of the Lord would carry positive connotations of care, providence, and sustenance.[65] As was the case in relation to a father figure, the Lord does not identify himself as master (אדון), but rather compares himself with a master (1:6e). He takes up and challenges an identification given to him by others. The priests are identified as sons-servants in the text (1:6h), but instead of giving fear-honor, as the text expects,[66] they are charged with despising (בזה) the name of the Lord.

The concept of the Lord as lord is so pervasive that it is used as a divine epithet. The term is present in 1:12c and 1:14d. In 1:12c there is a reference to the table of the lord (שׁלחן אדני), but a parallel declaration in 1:7e identifies this artifact as the table of the

63. The form אדונים is used only here in the Hebrew Bible. As it is parallel to a singular, we take it as a singular. The term is translated with a singular in the LXX.
64. ירא and כבד are parallel in the text. More on their relation in the following section dealing with Honor and Fear.
65. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. עבד.
66. As was already mentioned, fear (ירא), the appropriate response from a servant to a master (1:6f), and honor (כבד), the appropriate response from a son to a father, are parallel in the text (1:6d).

Lord (שלחן יהוה). Similarly, in 1:14d a curse is called upon one who sacrifices a corrupted animal to the lord (אדני). The context makes clear that this is no other than יהוה (1:14e).

The identity of the master/lord (אדון) in 3:1c has been subject to much debate.[67] But if one takes into consideration the usage of the term in Malachi, the identification is unambiguous. There is only one character identified as lord (אדון) in Malachi, the Lord (יהוה). Furthermore, in 3:1c there is a definite form of the noun (האדון). In the Hebrew Bible this form is used only in reference to the Lord.[68]

The next time the term עבד (servant) is used in the text is in 3:14b. Here an unidentified second plural complains about the lack of reward in connection to serving the Lord. These concerns are answered in 3:17h, where the one who serves is promised protection from destruction during the eschatological day of the Lord. In fact, according to the parallelisms in 3:18b-d, the distinction and, therefore the reward, between the righteous and the wicked depends on their relating to the Lord as servants. The righteous (צדיק) is the one who serves God (עבד אלהים). The wicked (רשע) is the one who does not serve him (אשר לא עבדו). The last use of the term עבד is in 3:22a. Unlike the father-son relationship, where no particular character is identified as a son to God, here Moses is identified as God's servant.

The relationship between masters and servants is used to illustrate the relationship between the Lord and his people. As good servants, the people are to honor the Lord. As a benevolent master, the Lord promises to protect the people.

Kings and Subordinates

Unlike the conditional constructions, where the Lord compares himself to a father or a master, he unequivocally presents himself as king, and not a common one. The Lord claims the designation מלך גדול (great king) for himself (1:14e).[69] No other character gives this designation to God in the text. The title, great king, is used in the Hebrew Bible to designate both the Lord and foreign kings.[70] In the text of Malachi, the Lord presents himself as sovereign over all nations (1:14g).

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67. For the full discussion of the characters in 3:1, see the section entitled "Messenger," in pages 140-147.
68. This construction appears elsewhere only in Isaiah 1:24, 3:1, 10:16, 33, and 19:4. In all cases it is coupled to יהוה צבאות, the usual divine title in Malachi. A proper name in a construct chain is always considered definite. See, Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 25.1.2.
69. There is not much emphasis on human kings in the Twelve, the focus is rather on the Lord as king. James D. Nogalski, "Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 61 (2007): 131.
70. For references to the Lord, see Psalm 47:3, 95:3. For references to foreign kings, see Ecclesiastes 9:14, 2 Kings 18:19, 28, Isaiah 36:4, 13, Jeremiah 25:14, 27:7.

There is another figure of socio-political power in the text, the פחה (governor). This term is a loanword understood to designate an officer who would serve under the Persian king.[71] The figure of the governor is presented as honored and is recognized as one with power to give rewards (1:8e-g).

The text contrasts the פחה (governor), who serves under a king and is honored, and the מלך גדול (great king), who is sovereign over all nations, but is dishonored.[72] In this way the relationship between kings and subordinates is used to illustrate the relationship between God and the people. If a local governor is honored, the Lord, the great king, should all the more be honored.

Greatness of the Lord

The semantic theme of the greatness of the Lord is introduced in unit 1:2-5 by an unidentified discourser, who addresses a second plural in 1:5c. The Lord is presented as great (גדל) beyond Israel.[73] The root גדל is used relatively sparingly in the book, only four other times. Nonetheless, the idea is pervasive, especially since the semantics are used in connection to terms such as name (שׁם), fear (ירא), and nations (גוי). In this way, we find echoes of the theme in many sections of Malachi.

Semantics of the greatness of the Lord are also used in unit 1:6-2:9. Here we find three very similar clauses, all fronted by the particle כי.

Malachi 1:11a	כי ... גדול שׁמי בגוים
Malachi 1:11e	כי־גדול שׁמי בגוים

These clauses repeat the phrase "my name is great among the nations." The identity of these nations and the interpretation of the Lord's pleasure towards them has long been debated.[74] One thing is clear; they are not Israel in the text and thus, the universal

71. Gesenius and Tregelles, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, s.v. פחה.
72. The reference to the Lord's table in connection to sacrifices seems to equate those to meals. This is not to indicate that the deity needed nourishment, but as a way to symbolize the social interactions and the honor that is intrinsic to relations between hosts and guests at a meal. See, Deborah W. Rooke, "Priests and Profits: Joel and Malachi," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, 2016, 93.
73. The term great (גדל) is used in concrete and abstract ways in the Hebrew Bible. The term can thus denote greatness literally, as in being big or strong, or figuratively, as in being important or advanced in years. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. גדל.
74. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32:313.

lordship of God is asserted.[75] Moreover, according to clause 1:11a, "the nations" refer to all nations under the sun. Thus, here we find an enlargement of 1:5c where the Lord was to be seen as great beyond Israel. Here that "beyond" includes all the nations. As they are not Israel, they do not have the Lord as their father and master. That makes the contrast all the greater. The nations, deprived of a relationship to the Lord, do acknowledge him as the universal sovereign. Israel, despite its privileged relation to the Lord, does not acknowledge him.

The third clause expressing the greatness of the Lord fronted by כי appears in the context of a curse statement.

Malachi 1:14e, g כִּי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי ... וּשְׁמִי נוֹרָא בַגּוֹיִם

Here the Lord portrays himself as a great king. The Lord is displeased because of the lack of appropriate response, given the difference in status between himself and his people. The Lord is not just a father, having charge in the realm of the family. The Lord is not just a master, having charge in the realm of society. The Lord is a great king, who is sovereign over all nations, and these nations fear him.[76]

This, in turn, is seen as the reason for the appropriate response of the nations in showing fear (ירא) to his name (שׁם). This demand is here presented to an unidentified cheater, but it had already been introduced in the text in regard to the priests (1:6h). Of them, it had been demanded to give honor (כבד in 1:6d) and fear (ירא in 1:6f); at the same time, they were accused of dishonoring the name (שׁם) of the Lord (1:6i). As has already been noted, the parallel use of honor (כבד) and fear (ירא) equates the terms and explains the demand for honor (כבד) to the priests in connection to the name of the Lord in 2:2c.

The divine attributes, of being כבד and being worthy of ירא, require an appropriate response of giving כבד and showing ירא.[77] Fearing (ירא) and honoring (כבד) the name (שׁם) are equivalent appropriate ways of responding to the greatness (גדל) of the Lord.

75. This does not mean that all peoples are saved, regardless of their relation to the God of the Bible, but refers to the efficacy of his purpose in saving the world. See, Jerry Hwang, "'My Name Will Be Great among the Nations': The Missio Dei in the Book of the Twelve," *Tyndale Bulletin* 65 (2014): 178. Other passages, both in prophetic (Isaiah 45:6) and wisdom (Psalm 113:3) texts, contain similar ideas about the universal dominion of YHWH.
76. The participle indicates an ongoing action in the text. Contra Goswell who sees 1:5, 1:11, and 1:14 as eschatological and thus prefers a future tense for translation. See, Greg Goswell, "The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013): 625–38.
77. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. כבד. Jenni and Westermann, s.v. ירא.

Besides the pagan nations already mentioned, Levi is presented as one who did fear the Lord (2:5b-d). Two *wayyiqtol* forms present him as an example from Israelite traditions, to make a contrast with the conduct of the priests.[78] There is a clear emphasis in the text presenting Levi as an example of one who honored God. His appropriate response to the divine is highlighted by the use of the noun מורא, a verbal form of ירא, and a verbal form of חתת.[79]

On the part of God's people, however, in the present moment of the text, the expectation for honor and fear is not realized. The curse of 1:14a is unleashed because of the offering of faulty sacrifices (1:14b-d). The כי in 1:14e makes explicit that it is because the Lord is great and to be feared that the curse has come. The actions of the cheater (נכל) who is cursed are in direct contrast with people among the nations who do fear the Lord.[80] In other words, it was the lack of honoring and fearing the Lord that caused the sending of the curse. In a similar way, the priests are also cursed because of failing to give honor (כבד) to the name (שׁם) of the Lord (2:2c, e-g).

Semantics of the greatness of the Lord are scarcely used further in the text. The root גדל is not used anymore referring to the character Lord and the root כבד is not used at all. There are nonetheless echoes of this semantic. The already established connection between the greatness (גדל) of the Lord, his name (שׁם), and an appropriate response of fear (ירא), will color the subsequent use of the terms name (שׁם) and fear (ירא). These echoes are mainly used to make a distinction between those who respond appropriately to God, by fearing him, and those who do not. In 3:16a, those who fear the Lord are identified as those who remember his name (3:16e). Likewise, in 3:20b those who fear the name of the Lord are promised deliverance and protection. Through the use of metonymy, the text equals the actions of fearing the Lord and fearing his name. On the other hand, a long list of offenders is presented as those who do not fear the Lord (3:5c).

An interesting twist in the use of semantics related to the greatness of the Lord occurs at the conclusion of the book. Here the terms great (גדל) and fearful (ירא) appear, not in connection to the Lord, but to his day (3:23a). This is, in a sense similar, but not the same, as what happens in the text to the name of the Lord and the Lord. Here the

78. The *wayyiqtol* indicates a narration of past events in the text.
79. חתת is a synonym of ירא. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), s.v. חתת. Gesenius and Tregelles, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, s.v. חתת; Miles Custis, "Fear," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Rebekah Hurst, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014).
80. The specific actions of those among the nations seem to be recounted in 1:11a-d.

day does not stand in place of the Lord, but the day and the Lord who acts in it are so closely identified, that the same terms are used to describe both.

The role of the semantics of the greatness of the Lord in Malachi is clearly illustrated by the triple use of fronted כי in the speeches of the Lord. This semantic is meant to explain or to give the reason why the Lord expects certain behavior from his people or behaves in a certain way towards his people. His greatness is a foundational reality of their relationship, as it is not a relationship among equals. The greatness of the Lord demands that all people, including Israelites and inhabitants of the nations, respond by fearing and honoring the name of the Lord.

The semantics of the greatness of the Lord appear openly only in the first two units of Malachi. Nonetheless, through the terms name (שם), great (גדל), and fear (ירא), there are echoes in other sections of the book. Since these terms have been loaded with meaning at the beginning of the book, they serve to call attention back to the issue of the greatness of God.

Liturgy

Several terms from the semantic field of liturgy and religious worship are used in Malachi. The word כהן (priest) is used in 1:6h, 2:1b, 2:7a. Levi (לוי), the ancestor of all priests according to Israelite traditions, is mentioned in 2:4c, 2:8c, 3:3c. The term היכל (temple) appears only once towards the end of the book (3:1c). Nonetheless, it was already present in the text through its parts, such as the doors (דלת) in 1:10b, and the altar (מזבח) in 1:7a, 1:10c, 2:13b. Festivals are described generically as חג (feasts) in 2:3b. The presenting of gifts to the Lord is introduced by the technical term נגש in 1:7a, 1:8a, 1:8c, 1:11b, 2:12c, 3:3f. The gifts themselves are introduced using a variety of terms: זבח (sacrifice) in 1:8a, 1:14d, מקטר (incense) in 1:11b, מנחה (offering) in 1:10f, 1:11c, 1:13f, 2:12c, 2:13c, 3:3f, 3:4a, מעשר (tithe) in 3:8e, 3:10a, and תרומה (priestly portion) in 3:8e. The liturgical interaction between people and the divine is described with mostly negative terms, such as בזה (despise) in 1:6i, 1:6k, 1:7e, 1:12d, 2:9a, גאל (defile) in 1:7a, 1:7c, 1:12c, and חלל (pollute) in 1:12a, 2:10d, 2:11c.

Semantics of liturgy are used to portray the priests and the people, in general, as offering substandard offerings to the Lord. The use of the term כהן (priest) in 1:6h introduces the semantic line to the book. The Lord charges the priests with despising (בזה) his name (1:6i).[81] Thus, to despise (בזה) is presented as the antithesis of to honor (כבד).[82] The

81. The participle in 1:6i implies a present, likely repeated or continual action.
82. בזה serves many times as an antonym for כבד, ירא, and שמר. See, G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), s.v. בזה.

priests respond to the accusation by using two questions: How have we despised (בזה)? in 1:6k, and how have we defiled (גאל)? in 1:7c. The Lord answers by saying that they are offering upon his altar (מזבח) defiled (גאל) bread in 1:7a, and that they have said that his table (שׁלחן) is despicable (בזה) in 1:7e. This interchange of questions and answers establishes a parallelism between בזה (despise) and גאל (defile), and between מזבח (altar) and שׁלחן (table).[83] Furthermore, the parallelism between בזה and גאל is seen clearly when comparing the declarations of the priests in 1:7de and 1:12bc.[84] The passages read:

Malachi 1:7de	בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן יְהוָה נִבְזֶה הוּא
Malachi 1:12bc	בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן אֲדֹנָי מְגֹאָל הוּא

These passages present syntactical and semantic parallels. Syntactically, both passages contain the same form of אמר, a noun in construct state, a noun in the absolute state, a participle, and a third person singular personal pronoun, in that order. Semantically, we can see that בזה andגאל are parallel. And, as was already noted when discussing the relation between masters and servants, the terms יהוה and אדני are also parallel. The parallelisms between בזה (despise) and גאל (defile) and between מזבח (altar) and שׁלחן (table) make clear the isotopic relation between bread (לחם), fruit (ניב), and food (אכל) in 1:7a and 1:12d.[85]

The nature of the defiled bread and the despised food or fruit that is placed on the Lord's altar/table is further elaborated through a double use of the root נגשׁ.[86] Priests are portrayed as bringing (נגשׁ) animals that are blind (עור), lame (פסח), and sick (חלה) in 1:8a, c. There is a similar list in 1:13ef, where they are portrayed as bringing (בוא) an offering (מנחה) consisting of animals that have been stolen (גזל), are lame (פסח), and sick (חלה). The root used is בוא, but it is semantically equivalent to נגשׁ.[87]

83. This possibility is considered by Ernst and granted by Gesenius. See, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Fabry Heinz-Josef, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), s.v. שׁלחן; Gesenius and Tregelles, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, s.v. שׁלחן.
84. In Malachi, the term גאל is unrelated semantically to גאל *qal* and *niphal*, meaning to redeem and be redeemed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 288.
85. Synecdoche, using a part to signify the whole, is a common figure of speech in the Hebrew Scriptures. See, Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated*, 627.
86. נגשׁ in *Hiphil* means to bring, but in Malachi the word seems to indicate the act of giving an offering or a sacrifice. This is confirmed by the coupling with the infinitive construct of זבח. See, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Fabry Heinz-Josef, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), s.v. נגשׁ.
87. The root בוא in the *Hiphil* is used to indicate the bringing of a cultic offering or gift. See, Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 1977, vol. 2, s.v. בוא.

The divine complaint about defective offerings is punctuated by an argument from a lesser to a greater situation.[88] The priests are challenged to bring (קרב) a similar gift to the Persian governor (1:8e).[89] The assumption is that if they understand that the governor would not be pleased (רצה) with such a gift, then surely the Lord would not be pleased.[90] The divine displeasure (רצה) in regards to defective offerings (מנחה) is openly presented in 1:10f. The same sentiment of displeasure (רצה) is repeated in 1:13g through the use of a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is also used in 1:9d with regards to the possibility of the Lord lifting the face (נשׂא פנה) of those who offer defective offerings, i.e., rewarding them as result of being pleased. Nonetheless, the expectation is clearly negative. This can be seen not just because of the rhetorical question itself, but also because of the word play using the root חלה. The second person is told to seek (חלה) the face of God (1:9a), immediately after they are portrayed as presenting sick animals (חלה)[91] to the Lord (1:8c, 1:13e).

The divine displeasure results in the wish for the temple service to stop. The Lord calls for the doors (דלת) to be closed (1:10b), so that his altar (מזבח) would not be used (1:10c). The only positive reference in regard to offerings (מנחה) received by the Lord is in regard to, most likely, pagan nations.[92] They are said to offer (נגשׁ) incense (מקטר) and clean offerings (מנחה) to the Lord (1:11bc).[93]

Semantics of liturgy are used to portray the people as having broken relationships with one another and thus polluting their collective covenant with the Lord. This in turn pollutes the holiness of the Lord. To pollute (חלל) was first used in 1:12a, in the context of describing improper offerings to the Lord. This term is reintroduced in the context of interpersonal relations.

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88. This kind of argumentation is identified in rabbinic hermeneutics as *kal va-chomer* or as an argument *a minori ad maius*.
89. קרב is synonym to נגשׁ and בוא. It is sometimes seen as a technical term for offering sacrifices, but it is also used for non-cultic gifts. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. קרב; Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. קרב. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Fabry Heinz-Josef, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), s.v. קרב.
90. The notion of pleasure is further elaborated through the idiomatic expression of the lifting of the face (נשׂא פנה) in 1:8g.
91. Same radicals, but different vocalization.
92. As we will discuss further on, the sons of Levi are promised that one day they will be cleansed and will be enabled to present proper offerings. Nonetheless, this is in the future, not in the present moment of the text.
93. The noun מנחה has two main connotations: an offering, whether bloody or not, and a gift. In this context nonetheless, the offering of the nations has most likely a liturgical meaning. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Fabry Heinz-Josef, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), s.v. מנחה.

We have suggested that clauses 2:10c and 2:10d and clauses 2:11ab and 2:11cd are parallel. Thus, to act treacherously (בגד) against a brother (2:10c) and to pollute (חלל) the covenant of fathers (2:10d), are ideas very closely linked. Similarly, Judah acting unfaithfully (בגד) in Israel and Jerusalem (2:11ab) and polluting (חלל) the holiness of the Lord (2:11cd) are ideas that closely relate to each other. These parallelisms reveal an isotopic relation between the terms to pollute (חלל) and to be unfaithful (בגד). Furthermore, an interconnexion between human and divine relations is also revealed. When a social break occurs, designated by the term unfaithfulness (בגד), a liturgical break follows, designated by the term pollute (חלל).

The text presents two offenses on the part of the second person. The second offense is easily identifiable (2:13a), but not so the first one. The clue to identify the first offense is hidden in the second one: the text reads, "this second thing you do (עשׂה)." The first use of the root in 2:11b reveals the first offense: abomination (תועבה) has been done (עשׂה). Since clause 2:11b is dependent upon 2:11a, there is a connection between doing abomination (תועבה) and acting treacherously (בגד). The treachery of Judah is seen initially in the breaking of faith (בגד) among brothers (2:10c). This treachery is further elaborated in the parallel clause 2:11c: Judah has polluted (חלל) the holiness of the Lord. Clause 2:11e presents in no unclear terms what the treachery and the polluting entail: the men of Judah have married foreign women.

The second offense paints a picture of the second person plural lamenting before the altar (מזבח) of the Lord because he does not accept their offering (מנחה).[94] This second person even asks why, even though cultic obligations are being met, yet there is no favor from the Lord. The divine answer clarifies the reason for the rejection and supports our identification of the first offense as well. The second person is charged with acting treacherously (בגד) against the wife of their youth (2:14c-d). This answer addresses both offenses and also shows that the second offense is not really a separate offense, but a buildup of the previous one. Even after being treacherous to their peers (2:10c) and their wives (2:11a), the Judeans expected to have their offering received with favor.

The syntax of the text shows how personal and intimate the betrayal is. Although a second person plural asks the question in 2:14a-b, the answer is not addressed to a collective entity but to the individual. The Lord is a witness between you (second singular pronominal suffix) and the wife of your (second singular pronominal suffix) youth (2:14c). Furthermore, clauses 2:14d-e place great emphasis on the intentionality of the second person to act deceitfully: you yourself (second singular personal

94. Many translations add a "with" in clause 2:13b. But the intention of the text seems to paint a picture with words. They cover the altar with tears because they are weeping and crying.

pronoun), you have been unfaithful (second singular verbal suffix) to her (third singular pronominal suffix), while she (third singular personal pronoun) is your (second singular pronominal suffix) partner and the wife of your (second singular pronominal suffix) covenant.

The use of the terms בגד and חלל reveal a connection in the text between social or ethical concerns and liturgical or cultic sins.[95] The treachery between brothers, an ethical issue, results in the polluting of a covenant, a liturgical issue. Similarly, marital treachery on the part of the men of Judah and the abandoning of their wives, both ethical offenses, are labeled as polluting the Lord himself, a strictly liturgical offense. Furthermore, offerings and outward signs of entreaty, cultic matters, are disregarded as long as the wives and their children are displaced, ethical concerns. According to the text, liturgical service is of no merit if human relations are at an impasse.[96]

Semantics of liturgy are also used to present the people as taking away from the Lord. Towards the end of the book, the terms מעשׂר (tithe) in 3:8e and 3:10a and תרומה (priestly portion) in 3:8e are introduced as that which is being robbed from the Lord by the people (3:8d). These terms appear in contrast to other terms such as bread (לחם) in 1:7a, fruit (ניב) in 1:12d, and offering (מנחה), initially used in 1:10f, that have been previously employed to designate gifts to the Lord.

In the Hebrew Bible, מעשׂר designates the tenth part of all produce which is considered as belonging to the Lord and is to be given for the maintenance of the Levites, consumed in communal meals, and given to the poor.[97] In a similar way, תרומה is used to designate several offerings or parts of offerings that were reserved for the priests.[98] Thus, both terms seem to designate gifts that are given to God, by being given to people. In contrast to sacrifices and offerings, subpar as they might be, that were offered directly to God through fire, the terms מעשׂר and תרומה designate things that were not offered directly to God. These gifts could only be given to God through people. Thus, in a sense these terms represent the ultimate blending of cultic and ethical concerns in the book of Malachi. While the Lord presents himself as robbed,

95. This goes against the opinion of Redditt, who considers that Malachi condemns people for ritual rather than ethical failures. See, Paul L. Redditt, "King, Priest, and Temple in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi and Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Ancient Near East Monographs 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 169.
96. For a discussion of ethical guidance distilled from Malachi, see, Groenewald and Boloje, "Prophetic Criticism of Temple Rituals: A Reflection on Malachi's Idea about Yahweh and Ethics for Faith Communities."
97. See, Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. מעשׂר.
98. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, s.v. תרומה.

in fact the ones deprived were the Levites, their families, and the poor on the land. To rob God was to rob people, and to rob people was to rob God.

The liturgical relation between God and his people is only set right by divine intervention. Clause 3:1c presents the lord (אדון) coming into his temple (היכל). The temple appears explicitly for the first time in the text here, but it has been present before, through other terms in the same semantic domain, such as altar (1:7a), table (1:7e), sacrifice (1:8a), doors (1:10b), offering (1:10f), incense (1:11b), and feasts (2:3b).[99] The connection between היכל and אדון in 3:1c can already be seen in some of these previous indirect references. In 1:12c the table, presumably the altar in the temple, belongs to the lord (אדון) and in 1:14d a corrupted sacrifice presented to the lord (אדון), presumably at his temple, is condemned.[100]

The lord (אדון) of 3:1c is parallel to the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) of 3:1e. As a result of the purifying work (טהר) of the messenger of the covenant in 3:3c, the sons of Levi (בני לוי) are able to bring (נגשׁ) proper offerings (מנחה) in 3:3f.[101] These sons of Levi have never before appeared in the text. Given the two positive references to Levi, in 2:4c and 2:8c, these sons should not be directly connected to him, but should rather be understood as a reference to priests who are now purified and enabled to serve. These priests have been presented previously as despising the Lord (1:6i), not listening and not putting their hearts to honor God (2:2a-c), departing from the way, making many fall with their teaching, ruining the covenant of Levi, not keeping God's ways, and showing favoritism in their teaching (2:8a-9c).

In the Hebrew Bible the purification of people usually involves water, while other things may be purified by fire.[102] In Malachi, water is implicitly mentioned in the reference to washers and soap (3:2c). Fire is explicitly mentioned (3:2c), and it is specially emphasized with references to refining (3:3a) and purifying silver and gold (3:3d). This may serve as a hyperbole, given the great perceived need of cleansing of the priests.

The divine cleansing results in that, for the first time in the text, the actions of God's people of bringing (נגשׁ) offerings (מנחה) are seen in a positive light (3:3f-3:4a). The

99. Only the first occurrence of the terms is noted. For a brief discussion of semantic domains, see Reinier de Blois, "Semantic Domains," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
100. Note that the lord (אדון), as a divine figure, is also connected to the temple in Isaiah 6:1, Amos 8:3, and Micah 1:2.
101. טהר refers to physical, ethical, and religious purity. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. טהר.
102. Numbers 8:6-21 describes the purification of the Levites, which involves water and washing. Numbers 31:22-24 deals with purification in general and both water and fire are used, depending on the nature of the thing to be purified. In Zechariah 13:9 there is a similar figure of purifying by fire.

offerings are seen as righteous (3:3f) and sweet (3:4a).[103] Previously in the text, all references to bringing (נגׁש) something to the Lord have been negative (1:7a, 1:8a, 1:8c, 2:12c). The only previous positive mention of bringing (נגׁש) something to the Lord was on the part of pagan nations (1:11b). In a similar way, all previous references to offerings (מנחה) were negative (1:10f, 1:13f, 2:12c, 2:13c) and the only positive mention was in regard to pagan nations (1:11c), whose offering is described as טהר, pure. Though the reference to the pagan nations may be hyperbolic, the cleansing (טהר) performed on the priests has, in effect, elevated their service to that of pagans.[104]

Semantics of liturgy are used to illustrate that the relation between humans and God cannot be solely based on cultic aspects. The text condemns improper service while making clear that pagans can give offerings that are acceptable to the Lord. The text also makes clear that God's people cannot give acceptable offerings while human relationships are at an impasse. Proper liturgical service is only rendered as a result of divine cleansing, so that pure offerings come from the hands of those who are in harmony with those around them.

Covenant

The idea of covenant is so pervasive in the Hebrew Scriptures that virtually any element in the text could be interpreted under that label: God's love for Jacob (1:2a) and the protection of his treasured possession (3:17e) are just two examples of this.[105] Nonetheless, this section focusses on elements clearly marked as belonging to the semantic field of covenant. The term ברית (covenant) is used six times in the book of Malachi in reference to four covenants. A covenant of Levi is mentioned in 2:4c, 2:5a, 2:8c. A covenant of the fathers in mentioned in 2:10d. A covenant of marriage appears in 2:14e. Lastly, an unqualified covenant is introduced in 3:1e.[106]

Covenant of Levi

The covenant with Levi (את לוי) in 2:4c, or of Levi (הלוי) in 2:8c, is introduced twice by the character Lord (2:4c, 2:5a) as "my covenant" (בריתי). The Lord also declared in 2:4b to have sent המצוה הזאת (this commandment) to maintain (להיות) his covenant

103. Previously Judah and Jerusalem were involved in abomination (2:11b), but now their offering is accepted. The special nature of this offering in 3:4a is highlighted by separating it from the verb.
104. The idea of the Lord's acceptance of the nations, whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, is important in the book of Malachi. Negative references, such as the condemnation of marriage with foreigners, need to be seen from this angle. The condemnation is based on the rejection of the God of Israel and not on the foreignness of people.
105. See, Boloje and Groenewald, "Literary Analysis of Covenant Themes in the Book of Malachi," 258.
106. The radicals ברית are also used in 3:2c with the meaning of "soap."

with Levi (2:4b).[107] This phrase was initially used in 2:1a, where it is followed by threats in case it is disobeyed (2:2ef). Even though the phrase המצוה הזאת is used twice and there are dire consequences for disobedience, it is not elaborated in the text. Which commandment is it referring to?

The word commandment (מצוה) does not appear previously in the text, so we should assume that the commandment has already been given, but not identified as such. As we look for clues in the text that would identify the command, we note first that the commandment is addressed to the priests (2:1b) by the use of a vocative (הכהנים). The only other occurrence of such vocative (הכהנים) is in 1:6h. We also note that the identity of the addressee of the commandment in 2:1a is emphasized by the use of a preposition (אל) plus a second plural personal pronoun (כם). In 1:6g we find a preposition (ל) plus a second plural personal pronoun (כם). In both passages the second plural refers to the priests. Lastly, we note that the protasis that precedes the threatened apodosis in case of disobedience is a failure to hear (שׁמע), in order to give glory (כבד) to the name of the Lord (2:2c). The term שׁמע is used here for the first time, but כבד was already expected from the priest in 1:6d. Thus, we can safely assume that המצוה הזאת (this commandment) is the charge to give honor and fear to the Lord, as addressed to the priests in 1:6a-i.

The term שׁמע (to hear) will appear only once more in the text, but in reference to the Lord and not to humans (3:16d). The action of listening is of great importance here, nonetheless, as failure to do so results in cursing.[108] The natural question would be, what do the priests need to listen (שׁמע) to? The whole text of Malachi consists of a series of direct speeches, so there would be plenty to listen to. But, more importantly, שׁמע (to listen) is semantically close to שׁמר (to keep). Although שׁמע derives its meaning from hearing and שׁמר from seeing, both can mean to obey.[109] The parallelism with שׂים (putting to heart) in 2:2b would also point in this direction. The divine call is for the priests to listen, in the sense of keeping or obeying.

107. This infinitive construct has been interpreted in different ways, but the sense "to maintain" seems to be the most appropriate in the context. See, Clark and Hatton, *A Handbook on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 401.
108. To listen (שׁמע) is parallel to putting to heart (שׂים). Nonetheless, syntactically, to listen (2:2a) is on a higher level than to put it to heart (2:2b). Clause 2:2a is asyndetic while 2:2b is preceded by a conjunction (ו). So, it could be argued that to listen would be the more important element, leading to the threat of a curse.
109. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. שׁמע. Timothy A. Gabrielson, "Obedience," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Rebekah Hurst, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2014).

The Lord's covenant with Levi is described in a direct speech by the Lord (2:5a-6d). This covenant, which is not mentioned anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible,[110] is described as life and peace (2:5a). Levi is presented as having true תורה on his lips (2:6a). The term תורה can refer to the law that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai/ Horeb, to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible traditionally ascribed to Moses, or to divine instructions in general. The context, nonetheless, seems to indicate that we should take the term to mean divine instructions in general. This is seen in the parallelism in 2:6ab:

Malachi 2:6a	תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הָיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ
Malachi 2:6b	וְעַוְלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בִשְׂפָתָיו

Here אמת תורה (true Torah) is contrasted to עולה (injustice), היה (to be) is contrasted to לא־מצא (not to be found), and פה (mouth) is parallel to שׂפת (lips).

The term תורה is also used in a chiastic structure in 2:7ab:

Malachi 2:7a	דַּעַת	יִשְׁמְרוּ	שִׂפְתֵי כֹהֵן
	C	B	A
Malachi 2:7b	מִפִּיהוּ	יְבַקְשׁוּ	וְתוֹרָה
	A'	B'	C'

Here A, שׂפת (lips), corresponds to A', פה (mouth), B שׁמר (keep) corresponds to B' בקשׁ (seek), and C דעת (knowledge) corresponds to C' תורה (Torah). It would thus seem best to take תורה to have a general, rather than a specific meaning in this context.

Levi is also presented as one who walked (הלך) with the Lord and turned (שׁוב) many (רב) from iniquity (מן + עון). A statement by an unidentified speaker interrupts the speech of the Lord and gives the idealized characteristics of a priest (2:7a-c).[111] He is

110. There are nonetheless two mentions of a covenant with Levites. In Jeremiah 33:21 there is reference to a covenant with Levitical priests (הלוים הכהנים). In Nehemiah 13:29 there is reference to a covenant of the priesthood and the Levites (ברית הכהנה והלוים).

111. Clauses 2:7a and 2:7c are fronted by the particle כי. The particle is being used to express the reason behind the criticism of the Lord. See, Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, sec. 40.29.1.3.

described as one who keeps (שׁמר) knowledge (דעת) and serves as a messenger of the Lord.[112]

The direct speech of the Lord concludes by listing the ways in which the priests have failed and pronouncing judgement (2:8a-9c). In contrast to Levi and to an ideal priest, the unfaithful priests addressed in the text are presented as departing (סור) from the way (מן + דרך) in 2:8a, which is renominalized as the Lord's ways (2:9b). They are also charged with making many (רב) fall with the instruction (תורה). They corrupted (שׁחת) the covenant of Levi.[113] As a consequence for not keeping (שׁמר) God's ways and showing partiality (נשׂא פנה) in the instruction (תורה),[114] the priests are made low (שׁפל)[115] and given (נתן) to being despised (בזה). Note the irony: Those who had been called to give (נתן) glory (כבד) to the Lord (1:6ef) and to listen (שׁמע) to him (2:1a-c), but in fact (1:6i) despised (בזה) and did not keep (שׁמר) the Lord's way (2:9b), are now (2:9a) given (נתן) to be despised (בזה).

The flow of the argument in describing the covenant of Levi and the contrast with the unfaithful priests addressed in the text can be summarized as follows:

A My covenant with Levi was life and peace and he feared me
- Aa Levi had true Torah
- Ab Levi walked with me and made many to turn from iniquity

B An ideal priest keeps knowledge and is a messenger of God
- Ab' You have departed from the way
- Aa' You make many fall with the Torah

A' You priests have ruined the covenant of Levi and are given to be despised

The covenant with Levi, the first one introduced, presents many characteristics that reappear in later covenants in the text. Here we can highlight first, that the word covenant is used to refer to an intimate and personal relation. The Lord refers to it

112. Note that the messenger of the Lord (מלאך יהוה) is a distinctly priestly figure (2:7c). This should be of interest as the character is reintroduced later in the text.
113. By allowing, among other reasons, the presenting of corrupted (שׁחת) sacrifices to the Lord (1:14d).
114. The context would cast this "lifting of the face" in a negative light. They are not favoring or honoring the Torah. Most likely they are giving partial rulings in their interpretation of the Torah, benefiting some to the expense of others. This is not the only way to interpret their action. For other options, see Clark and Hatton, *A Handbook on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 409.
115. This term is usually contrasted in a word pair with גבה (to be high or exalted). But it does reverse some of the semantic force of כבד. See, Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, 323–24.

twice as "my covenant." Second, the covenant entails obligations on the part of those involved. In this case the Lord fulfilled his part, he gave Levi life and peace. Levi is also presented as fulfilling his part by fearing the Lord. The priests are presented as being unfaithful and so ruining the covenant. Third, covenantal unfaithfulness results in judgement. Here the Lord assigns the priest to be despised as they had despised him.

Covenant of the Fathers

The covenant of the fathers is introduced in 2:10d. The text of Malachi does not elaborate on the nature of this covenant. The book only mentions that it entails treachery among brothers (2:10c, 2:11a), the doing of abomination (2:11b), and the polluting of God's holiness (2:11c). If our analysis so far is correct, all these actions converge in the marrying of foreign women (2:11e).

The exact phrase ברית אבתינו (covenant of our fathers) appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. But there are numerous references to covenants of fathers or ancestors in Deuteronomic and Prophetic texts.[116] These refer to the traditional understanding of a covenant or agreement between God and the descendants of Abraham at Sinai/Horeb.

The phrase here does seem to refer to an agreement that affects the totality of God's people and the relationship with the Lord is also in view, as his holiness is affected. Nonetheless, the focus of the text seems to be on the social aspects of the agreement between God and the people of Israel. It is the social fabric and the social agreements which allows people to live harmoniously in community which seem to be at the forefront. When men choose as wives the daughters of foreigners instead of the daughters of their conationals, they endanger the social fabric of the covenant people.

The covenant of the fathers, as was the case with the covenant of Levi, is presented in a negative light (2:10d); it is a covenant that is חלל (polluted). In another sense, this covenant is different from that of Levi, as it has to do with all of God's people and not just a portion of it.

Covenant of Marriage

The covenant with the wife is presented in 2:14e. The "wife of your covenant" (אשת בריתך) is described twice (2:14c, 2:15f) as the "wife of your youth" (אשת נעוריך). There are no other mentions in the Hebrew Bible of such a covenant between man and wife and so the word "covenant" may be understood here as agreement or promise. There is nonetheless an interesting mention in Proverbs 2:16-17 of a woman (אשה), who is a foreigner (נכר) and abandons the friend of her youth (נעורים) and the

116. See for example, Deuteronomy 4:31, 7:12, 8:18, 1 Kings 8:21, 2 Kings 17:15, Jeremiah 11:10, 31:32, 34:13.

covenant (ברית) of her God. It would almost seem as if Malachi 2:11, 14-15 is reversing this text and applying it to men.[117] In Malachi, Judean men are presented as choosing foreign women and abandoning their Judean wives, the wives of their youth, the wives of their covenant.

The Lord's reaction towards the Judean men's treachery (בגד) against their wives (2:14d) is seen in his testifying (עוד) in the women's favor (2:14c) and in not making (עשׂה) the men and the foreign wives one (2:15a). The intensity of the Lord's concern for the wives is also seen in the deliberate change from second person plural to singular, in 2:2:15e-16f. The Lord makes his communication very personal, perhaps mirroring the very intimate nature of the subject under discussion. This second person singular is not to be understood as a particular person. It just serves to express the intimate nature of the relation, and therefore, the intimate nature of the offense.

This intimacy that exists between a man and his "covenant wife" does not exist in the case of the foreign women. The wife of the youth is the man's חברת (2:14e), which is translated as "partner" or "companion." This term is used five times in the Hebrew Bible. Besides this occurrence in Malachi, it appears only in the account of the building of the Tabernacle. It designates matching pieces that hold the curtains together (Exodus 26:4, 10, 36:17). Thus, the man and his wife are presented as a composite unit.

As was the case with the covenant of Levi, the term שׁמר (keep) is also used here. Husbands are invited twice (2:15e, 2:16e) to שׁמר (keep) their רוח (spirit). Given that the prohibition to act unfaithfully (בגד) towards their wives is also given twice (2:15f, 2:16f) and that the only other mention of רוח (spirit) in 2:15d is to point out the non-existence of real unity between a man and his foreign wife, this can be seen as a call to a renewal of the marriage covenant between a man and the wife of his youth.

Another similarity with the covenant of Levi, as well as with the covenant of the fathers, is that this covenant is also a broken one. Clause 2:14d declares in no unclear terms that the man has been unfaithful to his wife.[118]

117. For a discussion of how Malachi's call to Torah compliance would result in practical wisdom for daily living, see, Boloje, "Malachi's Use of תּוֹרָה in Dialogue with the Wisdom Tradition of Proverbs."
118. As was mentioned before, the Hebrew syntax is quite emphatic. It reads literally, "you yourself have been unfaithful to her herself."

The Covenant

The last use of the term ברית (covenant) in Malachi is in 3:1e. The term is used in the phrase, מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant). Here the term appears by itself in the definite form.[119] Unlike previous uses, ברית is not used in relation to a person. In 2:4c, 5a, and 8c there are references to a covenant with Levi. In 2:10d there is a reference to a covenant of the fathers. In 2:14e there is a reference to a covenant with the wife of a man's youth. But here this covenant is not with the מלאך (messenger). He communicates the covenant but is not a beneficiary of it.

The nature of this covenant can be inferred from the nature of the messenger and his work. The מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant) is parallel in 3:1c to האדון (the lord). As we have seen, all other uses of the term אדון (lord) in Malachi refer to the Lord (יהוה). This seems to be also the case here, as this אדון is presented as the owner of the היכל (temple). The work of the messenger results in the purification of the sons of Levi (3:3c-4a), most likely a reference to the priests who were previously accused of ruining the covenant of Levi (2:8c). In a similar way, the Lord (יהוה) announces in 3:5b his judgement against adulterers (נאף) and the oppressors of widows (אלמנה) and orphans (יתון). These likely represent those who have abandoned the wives of their youth and their children, the seed of God. They have been unfaithful to the covenant of the fathers and the covenant with their wives. This connection seems to be strengthened by the use of the root עוד (testify). In 3:5a the Lord presents himself as a עד (witness) on behalf of a long list of those being oppressed. In 2:14c the Lord presents himself as one who עוד (testified) between a man and the forsaken wife of his youth, the wife of his covenant.

It would seem then that this unqualified ברית (covenant) of 3:1e refers in reality to the one covenant that undergirds all other covenants, to the traditional understanding of an agreement between the Lord and his people at Sinai/Horeb.

The semantics of covenant appear in two more places in Malachi. Although the term ברית does not appear anymore, other related terms are used. In 3:7ab a second plural is accused of סור (turning) from the חק (statutes) and of not שׁמר (keeping) them. חק is used here for the first time in Malachi. This term is quite common in the Hebrew Bible as it is used in many cases to designate God's laws and regulations, whether in whole or in part.[120] Here, it can be seen as a synonym of תורה.

119. Outside of Malachi, the construction הברית is used to refer to several covenants: the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:12, 17), the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 24:7-8), a renewal of the covenant at Sinai (2 Chronicles 34:31), a covenant between a king and his people (2 Kings 11:17), a covenant with David (2 Chronicles 21:7), the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31), and a covenant between nations (Ezekiel 30:5).
120. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. חקק.

These terms provide a link to the semantics of covenant, especially the covenant of Levi. Previously, Levi was presented as one who used the Torah to save (2:6a). An ideal priest was presented as one who שׁמר (keeps) knowledge, which is parallel to Torah (2:7ab). In contrast the priests were presented as סור (turning) from the way (2:8a), using the Torah to turn people from the way (2:8b), and playing favorites with it (2:9c).

Semantics related to covenant appear lastly at the conclusion of the book. In 3:22ab a second plural is commanded to remember the תורה (instruction) of Moses, which the Lord צוה (commanded) him, חק (statutes) and משׁפט (judgements).[121] We already saw how the terms תורה and חק are related to each other and to the semantics of covenant, especially the covenant of Levi. The term מצוה was used twice also in the context of the covenant of Levi (2:1a, 2:4b). The term משׁפט (judgement) was used before in the context of the work of the Lord (3:5ab), which follows the work of the messenger of the covenant. This judgement of the Lord affects those who pollute the covenant of the fathers and are unfaithful to the covenant with their wives.

Semantics of covenant are used in the book of Malachi to signify personal and intimate relations. There are obligations for the parties to maintain these relations. These relations are assumed in the text to be worthy of obedience and loyalty, to be kept in time. There are consequences for not meeting the requirements to keep the relations.

Different covenants in Malachi appear to be juxtaposed in order to express something about the relation between God and his people. These different covenants or agreements, with Levi, with the fathers, and with the wife of the youth, seem to create a prelude to the main covenant between God and his people. While those covenants are seen as valuable, they are also presented as ruined, polluted, and broken. This highlights the importance and the value of the covenant with the Lord and serves to invite to action, so that this covenant does not end as had the other ones. Although the covenants mentioned are different from one another, at the end they seem to combine in a call to return to the one covenant between God and his people.[122]

121. The phrase "statutes and judgments" is used only here and in Deuteronomy 4:5, 8, 14.
122. "Malachi's exhortation to all Israel of the necessity of Torah compliance is thus a call to an appropriation of the essential requirements and ideal of covenant relationship – of Yahweh's sovereignty in all of creation and thus confidence and trust in him, and of moral integrity, faithfulness, and justice." Boloje and Groenewald, "Malachi's Concept of a Torah-Compliant Community (Ml 3:22 [MT]) and Its Associated Implications," 6–7.

Messenger

The term מלאך (messenger)[123] is used only four times in the text of Malachi but much has been written about the identity and nature of these messengers. The first time the term is used is in 1:1b. Since Haggai is identified as מלאך יהוה (Haggai 1:13), this has led some to name him as the author of the book of Malachi (Malachi 1:1).[124] This, nonetheless, overlooks the Hebrew syntax and the fact that others, including celestial beings, are identified as מלאך in the collection of the Twelve.[125]

The form used in the text is מלאכי, having a first singular personal pronoun, and it appears in a phrase uttered by an unidentified speaker. The Lord is not the speaker as he is being spoken about. Since the Lord is not the speaker, he cannot be referring to "my messenger [the Lord's messenger]." Thus, as was mentioned in the chapter dealing with the syntactical analysis, מלאכי in 1:1b needs to be seen as the name, and not the title, of the prophetic entity who functions as the (text-immanent) author of the book. The term מלאך here names the human who is entrusted with a word from the Lord for Israel.

The second use of מלאך appears in 2:7c. Here an unidentified speaker describes an ideal priest (כהן) as one who keeps (שׁמר) knowledge (דעת) and is a source of instruction (תורה) for the people. This is so because he is a מלאך יהוה־צבאות (messenger of the Lord of Hosts). This phrase appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. This is a unique contribution of the book to the theology of the Old Testament, as nowhere else is a priest called a messenger. This reveals a very high appreciation for priests in the book.[126]

Although the phrase מלאך יהוה־צבאות is unique to Malachi, the phrase מלאך יהוה (messenger of the Lord) is common in the Hebrew Bible. On some occasions the phrase appears to designate human entities, while in others it appears to designate non-human, even divine, entities.[127] In the collection of the Twelve מלאך יהוה is used

123. To use the term "angel" to translate מלאך is misleading, as not all messengers are to be seen as angels or heavenly beings.
124. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism*, 255, 267.
125. See, Hoshea 12:5, Nahum 2:14, Zechariah 1:9, 11, 12, 2:2, 7, 3:1, 3, 5, 6, 4:1, 4, 5, 5:5, 10, 6:4, 5, 12:8.
126. See, Boloje and Groenewald, "Perspectives on Priests' Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6-2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence," 397.
127. The phrase מלאך יהוה (messenger of the Lord) is used in Genesis 16:7, 9-11, 22:11, 15, Exodus 3:2, Numbers 22:22-27, 31-32, 34-35, Judges 2:1, 4, 5:23, 6:11-12, 21-22, 13:3, 13, 15-18, 20-21, 2 Samuel 24:16, 1 Kings 19:7, 2 Kings 1:3, 15, 19:35, 1 Chronicles 21:12, 15-16, 18, 30, Psalm 34:8, 35:5-6, Isaiah 37:36, Haggai 1:13, Zechariah 1:11-12, 3:1, 5-6, 12:8. A similar term מלאך אלהים (messenger of God) is used in Genesis 21:17 and 1 Samuel 29:9. A study of these terms outside the book of Malachi, while interesting, is not among the purposes of this research.

on two other occasions to refer to a prophet (Hag 1:13) and a king (Zec 12:8).[128] Here מלאך designates a priestly figure, portrayed as belonging to the Lord.

The third use of מלאך is in 3:1a, where an unidentified first-person singular announces the imminent coming of his messenger (מלאכי). The imminence is seen by the use of the construction הנה plus a participle. The מלאך is said to belong to the first singular speaker and is tasked with preparing the way (דרך) for this first person. The syntactical structure of this speech and the ones that follow, reveal that the speaker is the Lord. The syntactical construction of 3:1ab also points in this direction. The construction הנה followed by a participle of שׁלח is also found in 2:3a and 3:23a. In both cases the speaker is the Lord. Furthermore, the construction הנה coupled with a first singular, a participle of שׁלח, an object, and the prepositional phrase לפני appears in 3:1ab and 3:23a. In 3:23a, the speaker is the Lord. Lastly, the use of שׁלח (to send) also points to the Lord, who is the subject of the verb in all four uses in the book.[129] Given that the usual title for the Lord in Malachi is יהוה־צבאות, this messenger can hypothetically also be seen as מלאך יהוה־צבאות.

Given the previous uses of מלאך and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we should assume that the מלאך of 3:1a refers to a human messenger. Nonetheless, this human being seems to be neither the prophet מלאכי of 1:1b, nor a priestly figure as in 2:7c. The מלאכי of 1:1b has already been sent, while the מלאכי of 3:1a is still in the future of the text. In the same way, a priestly מלאך seems to be out of the question, as they were accused of departing from (2:8a) and not keeping to (2:9b) God's way (דרך), but are here tasked with preparing it. Furthermore, the sons of Levi, the priests, are object of the future purifying work described in 3:3cd. Since they need to be brought back to the way, surely, they are not the ones preparing it.[130]

The close parallelism between 3:1ab and 3:23a not only serves to identify the speaker of 3:1ab, but also the מלאך there. In 3:1ab מלאכי is sent before the Lord, while in 3:23a אליה (Elijah) is sent before the day of the Lord. It would seem therefore that the

128. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," 124.
129. The term is used in 2:2e, 2:4b, 2:16a, and 3:23a.
130. In Malachi the terms "priest" and "Levite" seem to be used interchangeably. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a distinction between priests and Levites, and the sons of Levi. See, Mark Leuchter, Jeremy Michael Hutton, and Society of Biblical Literature, eds., *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, Society of Biblical Literature. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 202. Boloje and Groenewald, "Perspectives on Priests' Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6-2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence," 395; Leuchter, Hutton, and Society of Biblical Literature, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 202.

messenger of the Lord in 3:1ab is a prophetic figure identified as Elijah in 3:23a. These seem to be parallel designations for the same human prophetic entity.[131]

The last use of the term מלאך is in the phrase מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant) in 3:1e. This phrase is used nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.[132] The identity of this מלאך and its relation to theמלאך in 3:1a has been at the center of much scholarly discussion. So much so that to solve the problem some argue that 3:1 is a, rather clumsy, addition to the text.[133] Nonetheless, it seems better to explain the difficulty, rather than brush it away as secondary.

Scholars have proposed several identities for the characters present in 3:1a-h. For example, some see the מלאך in 3:1a (my messenger), the מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant) in 3:1e, and Elijah in 3:23a as being the same.[134] Some see the אדון in 3:1c (lord) and the מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant) in 3:1e as the same entity.[135] Still others see יהוה (the Lord), as the אדון in 3:1c (lord) and the מלאך הברית (the messenger of the covenant) in 3:1e.[136] There is so much confusion regarding the identity of the figures mentioned in 3:1a-h that some offer an interpretation as the actual reading of the text. Polaski renders the text as "the LORD whom you seek will suddenly come into his temple."[137]

The identity of this מלאך הברית (messenger of the covenant) in 3:1e is seen by the parallelism between clauses 3:1c and 3:1e, and between clauses 3:1d and 3:1f. In 3:1c we have a definite third person singular, identified as the master/lord (האדון), who enters his temple.[138] In 3:1e we find the definite מלאך הברית (messenger of the

131. David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007): 3. Richard M. Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20 (2016): 80.
132. The terms מלאך and ברית appear together in the Hebrew Bible only in Judges 2:1, 2 Samuel 3:12, Ezekiel 17:15, and Malachi 3:1. Only in Judges, and apparently in Malachi as we will see, does the text refers to a non-human messenger (מלאך) and a non-human covenant (ברית).
133. See, Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," 71, 75.
134. Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," 214–15. Boloje and Groenewald, "Malachi's Eschatological Day of Yahweh," 68. Anthony Robert Petterson, "The Identity of 'The Messenger of the Covenant' in Malachi 3:1: Lexical and Rhetorical Analyses," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 29 (2019): 277–93.
135. Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," 83.
136. Camden M. Bucey, "The Lord and His Messengers: Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1-4," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 7 (2011): 135. Malone, "Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?," 227.
137. The Hebrew text reads האדון, the lord, and not יהוה, as an all caps "LORD" implies. Donald C. Polaski, "Between Text and Sermon: Malachi 3:1-12," *Interpretation* 54 (2000): 416.
138. Note the emphasis on the אדון as it is placed separate from the verb at the end of the sentence.

covenant), but there is no verb in this clause. The verb is assumed or carried over from 3:1c. Here we see that the text parallels the האדון with the מלאך הברית. Similarly, in clauses 3:1d and 3:1f, we have a relative pronoun (אשר), followed by the second plural pronoun (אתם) and a plural participle. In 3:1d the participle root is בקש (to seek) and in 3:1f the participle root is חפץ (to desire). Here we see that the action בקש is paralleled to חפץ. Clause 3:1g supports the interpretation of מלאך הברית and אדון as referring to one entity, as we find the announcement of the imminent coming of a third singular, not a plural.[139] A graphic representation illustrates the point.[140]

ופתאם יבוא אל־היכלו האדון
And suddenly he goes into his temple, the lord

אשר־אתם מבקשים
whom you long for

ומלאך הברית
and the messenger of the covenant

אשר־אתם חפצים
whom you take delight in

הִנֵּה־בָא
Yes! He is going

All previous uses of מלאך in the text would indicate that the מלאך הברית should be considered a human entity, but the coupling with האדון seems to indicate otherwise. As was noted previously in this study, the term אדון appears in 1:6e, 1:12c, and 1:14d. In all cases it points to יהוה צבות, the usual divine title in Malachi.[141] It seems then that

139. Some may see 3:1gh as rather connected to 3:1ab, where the Lord announces the imminent coming of a third singular, מלאכי. But this is unlikely as both the clauses before (3:1c-f) and after (3:2a-4a) relate to the מלאך הברית, who is equated to a divine figure in the text, and not מלאכי, who is equated to a human figure in the text.
140. Bucey sees a chiastic structure here as follows,
    He comes to his temple
        The Lord, whom you desire,
        The messenger of the covenant, whom you seek
    He comes
    See, Bucey, "The Lord and His Messengers: Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1-4," 134; Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 355.
141. See also, Redditt, "The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting," 250.

the terms מלאך הברית and האדון refer to one entity, and that one entity can be seen as referring to the Lord of hosts (יהוה צבות).[142]

But, if the מלאך הברית is to be considered as one entity with the האדון and this one entity is to be seen as יהוה, then we seem to have the Lord (יהוה) announcing his own coming as a third person in 3:1g. This would be a case of illeism, which would be unusual syntax, but one that in the opinion of some is common in regard to the Lord in the Hebrew Bible.[143]

There are two problems, however, with seeing the Lord as announcing his own coming in the third person. The first has to do with the use of labels. Why would the label מלאך be used if something other than a human messenger was intended? Further, why would the Lord identify himself as אדון when previously only other characters have used that label for him? The second problem entails the nature of the work of מלאך הברית in 3:2a-4a and יהוה in 3:5a-d. Their activity is quite different.[144] The lord (האדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) purifies the Levites and their offering becomes acceptable to the Lord (יהוה). After purification is done, then the Lord (יהוה) comes for judgment (3:5a).[145] If the work of the אדון is different from the work of the יהוה and the result of the work of the אדון is different from the result of the work of the יהוה, they cannot be the same entity. Two questions remain then, is the lord (האדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) the same as the Lord (יהוה)? Does the Lord announce his own coming in the third person? The next section dealing with communication analysis should provide an answer.

Semantics of a messenger appear again at the conclusion of the book through the use of the terms הנה, a first person, a participle of שׁלח, and the prepositional phrase לפני 3:23)a). As we saw, these provide a link to 3:1ab. The entity sent is identified as Elijah the prophet, who in a way also prepares the way before the Lord.[146] As Levi (2:6d), this messenger is tasked with שׁוב (turning) hearts towards the Lord, the ultimate

142. Clendenen also proposes to see the messenger of 3:1 as a human messenger, the lord as the Lord, and the messenger of the covenant as equivalent to the lord. See, E. Ray Clendenen, "'Messenger of the Covenant' in Malachi 3:1 Once Again," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62 (2019): 81–102. According to Miller, the way the LXX reads, Elijah prepares the way and then the Lord comes to his temple for cleansing judgement. See, Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," 11.
143. See, Andrew S. Malone, "God the Illeist: Third-Person Self-References and Trinitarian Hints in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52 (2009): 499–518. Elledge, Ervin Roderick, "The Illeism of Jesus and Yahweh: A Study of the Use of the Third-Person Self-Reference in the Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Its Implications for Christology," 85–104.
144. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 92.
145. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," 5.
146. Bucey, "The Lord and His Messengers: Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1-4," 136.

reality behind father-son language (3:24ab). This coming of a messenger before the day of the Lord is an original contribution of Malachi to the eschatology of the Hebrew Bible.[147]

The semantics of a messenger are used to introduce different characters that appear intimately connected to the Lord and who have specific tasks to accomplish. The term is used to designate the prophetic figure presented as the (text-immanent) author who conveys the words of the Lord, an ideal priestly figure who gives knowledge and instruction to God's people, and an end-time prophet who is tasked with preparing the way, by reconciling generations. All these are human messengers entrusted with specific tasks. The term is also used for a divine messenger who comes to his temple and purifies the sons of Levi. This use deviates from the pattern of human messengers in the text.

Blessing and Cursing

Semantics of blessings and curses are present in the text primarily through the terms ברך (to bless) and ארר (to curse). Other terms are also present both for blessing and cursing. Statements of cursing appear five times in the book and there are two statements of blessing. The first formal curse statement appears in 1:14a.[148] Here a *Qal* passive participle of ארר is followed by another participle that serves as its object.[149] This is a standard

147. Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," 211, 214. Wielenga, "Eschatology in Malachi: The Emergence of a Doctrine," 9.

148. I distinguish between formal and informal, or subtle, curse declarations. In formal curse declarations, a definite verb for cursing is used. In informal curse declarations, other elements, more subjective in their interpretation, are used. Stuart proposes an extensive list of twenty-seven types of curses, which he summarizes with six terms: defeat, disease, desolation, deprivation, deportation, and death. To use the phraseology of the Hebrew Bible we could note that curses usually involved the death of the transgressor and his sons and daughters; sickness; infertility of the land, animals, and people; military defeat; destruction of the transgressor's house and city, which is then inhabited by wild animals; destruction by locusts; slavery; exile; becoming a byword; worship of idols; drought; starvation; and cannibalism. Cf. Genesis 9:20-27; Leviticus 26:14-39; Deuteronomy 4:26-31; 11:16,17; 28:15-68; Jeremiah 17:5,6. Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, vol. 31, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1987), xxxii. We can consider 1:2a-5c as an example of what could be considered an informal curse. There we have an abundance of what appears to be curse language, known curse themes and terminology in the Hebrew Bible, applied to Esau/Edom. The Lord has devastated (שׁממה) Esau's mountainous inheritance, as in Leviticus 26:33, has given it to wild animals, as in Isaiah 33:22 and Jeremiah 49:33, and his cities have become ruins (חרבה) as in Leviticus 26:31, 33 and Jeremiah 25:18. Furthermore, the unidentified speaker in 1:4i, also uses vocabulary that can be interpreted as covenantal curse language by declaring Edom an object of mockery and derision, as in Deuteronomy 28:37. Finally, Edom is declared as a people towards whom the Lord is זעם (indignant), as in Numbers 23:7–8. This could be considered tantamount to a declaration of curse as the word appears to be semantically equivalent to ארר and קבב since both terms can be translated as "to curse." See, David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 1:1218; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 31:xxxii.

149. There is a conjunction (ו) heading the clause. That will be discussed in the next section dealing with the ordering of the semantics.

construction for uttering a curse statement.[150] The participle of נכל, a cheater, is the recipient of the curse.[151] The grounds for cursing are listed by using a noun and two participles. The noun יֵשׁ expresses the reality of the existence of a proper animal in the cheater's herd.[152] Two participles portray the actions that follow: he vows (נדר), presumably to give a proper offering, but ends up sacrificing (זבח) a corrupted (שׁחת) animal.

The identity of the speaker of the curse statement is unknown. It is not the Lord, as he is referred to in the third person in 1:14d. Likewise, the identity of the cheater is not explicit in the text. But it does seem to be different from the priests, who are identified as the addressees throughout the unit. The priests have been identified as sons (1:6a), servants (1:6b), and even despisers (1:6i) and profaners (1:12a) of the name of God. But the term cheater is used here for the first time. Also, the cheater owns a flock of animals (1:14b). This detail is irrelevant in the case of priests, who would not usually offer what belonged to them, but rather what was brought to them. Furthermore, the cheater vows to give. Again, a priest would not vow, but would just offer sacrifices as part of his duties. Finally, the term שׁחת (spoiled) is used here for the first time in the text while other terms had been used in connection to the priests before.

Semantics of cursing are used here to express disapproval of the one who is able to give a proper sacrifice, but chooses to present a substandard one. This is portrayed as an offense to the greatness of the Lord (1:14e) and is compared as lower than the service of the (pagan) nations (1:14g).

The second curse statement is introduced in 2:2e-g. This statement is presented in more forceful terms than the previous one. The speaker is the Lord (2:2d) and the addressee is clearly identified by the vocative in 2:1b as the priests. Two protases present what is required to fulfill one objective. The protases are preceded by a command (2:1a), referring to the call to give honor and fear (1:6). They need to שׁמע (hear in 2:2a) and שׂים על־לב (put it to heart in 2:2b) in order to give כבד (honor) to the

150. Other common formulas are אָרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר and אָרוּר אֲשֶׁר. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. ארר. See also, Christian Stadel, "Oath/Curse Formulae: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

151. The participial form of this root is used only here in the Hebrew Bible.

152. The proper animal is identified as זכר (a male). On this, Boloje and Groenewald comment, "male animals were specifically required for Passover sacrifices (Exodus 12:5), burnt-offerings (Leviticus 1:3, 10), sin-offerings (Leviticus 4:3, 23), and votive sacrifices or free-will offerings (Leviticus 22:18-20)." This last offering is the one the verse mentions, since it involves a vow. "However, when the petition was granted the worshipper was often tempted to offer a cheap substitute for a sacrifice (Psalm 76:11)." Boloje and Groenewald, "Perspectives on Priests' Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6-2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence," 394.

שם (name) of the Lord (2:2c). Two apodoses present the possible results of disobedience; one actual result follows.

The priests are threatened with *the* curse (המארה) in 2:2e. This is a clear analogy to the covenantal curses as recorded in Deuteronomy, since the definite form of the noun (המארה) is used only here, 3:9a, and Deuteronomy 28:20.[153] Moreover, their blessings (ברך) could be cursed (ארר), as expressed in 2:2f. There is no similar passage in the Hebrew Bible. This would seem to entail not only a punishment, but also a reversal of benefits.[154] The *qatal* in 2:2g presents the actual result, by changing the mood from subjunctive to indicative, i.e., from possibility to accomplished reality. Since the condition is regarded as being met, the priests have not taken the call to heart (2:2h), a statement of cursing (ארר) is uttered by the Lord.

The force or intensity of the curse statement is seen through several techniques. First, there is a triple use of ארר. The Lord threatens with sending the מארה, a noun form of 2:2) ארר) and with cursing (ארר) in 2:2f.[155] The accomplished act of ארר (cursing) is announced in 2:2g.[156] Second, the object of the curse is their ברכה (blessing) in 2:2f. This involves a semantic reversal, as blessing and curse are antonyms. Finally, there is the use of the particle גם, which adds emphasis.

The object of the curse is problematic. The Lord has cursed "it," a third-person feminine singular. But there is no such antecedent in the context. We only find the male plural priests, a male singular seed, and feminine plural blessings. Noticing a special use of the third feminine singular solves the difficulty. It is being used as a neuter referring to a whole situation.[157] The translation would then be, "and indeed I have cursed" or "I have already cursed."

153. The noun מארה is used only five times in the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 28:20, Proverbs 3:33, 28:27, Malachi 2:2, 3:9). The analogy with Deuteronomy is strengthened by the presence of the root שלח. Prophets did not invent curses or blessings. They referred to the covenantal blessing and curses in the Torah. It is only in connection to the blessings and curses of the mosaic covenant that much of the prophetic writings can be made sense of. See, Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 1258. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 31:xxxii; Wielenga, "The Deuteronomic Roots of Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology in Malachi," 2.
154. ארר is the opposite ofברך . The Lord is also seen in the Hebrew Bible as sovereign over blessing and cursing, having the power to turn one into the other. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. ארר.
155. The construction *yiqtol* (2:2a-b) followed by *w^{e}qatal* (2:2ef) is typical of conditional phrases.
156. The *qatal* in 2:2g points to an action already accomplished in the text.
157. See, Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, sec. 152.2; Gesenius, Euting, and Lidzbarski, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 122.4; Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 79.

Clauses 2:3a-c, while not formally a curse statement, are definitely colorful and do seem to describe what the curse of 2:2g entails.[158] The text seems to use assonance to convey a strong message of judgement: פֶּרֶשׁ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם פֶּרֶשׁ וְזֵרִיתִי אֶת־הַזֶּרַע לָכֶם גֹּעֵר חַגֵּיכֶם הִנְנִי . The terms זרע (seed) and זרא (scatter) have a similar sound as well as the terms פרשׁ (feces) and פנים (face). The Lord promises to rebuke the seed by "scattering feces on your faces, the feces of your feasts."

Semantics of curse are used in this passage to portray the possible removal of divine favor. After being affected only secondarily, at the most, by the curse statement in 1:14, here the priests are the object of a much more emphatic curse declaration. Even though they are not the providers of substandard sacrifices, they are the ones presenting them to the Lord and are held accountable for it. The Lord threatens to curse their blessings. This may indicate a change in their status from blessed to cursed, a derogation of the blessings they would utter in behalf of people, and the removal of their right to utter such blessings. The rebuking of their descendants and the scattering of feces on the priests and their being removed and carried away with the feces seems to indicate the possibility of present and future barring for service.

The third curse statement in Malachi does not use a technical term from the semantic field of blessing or cursing, such as ארר previously. What we find is a modal *yiqtol* of כרת (to cut) in 2:12a, expressing a wish or desire for the Lord to destroy someone; this can, therefore, be seen as a curse statement.[159] There are also three contextual reasons why this declaration should be interpreted as a curse statement. First, the desire is expressed towards the one who does "it", a third feminine singular (2:12b). As was previously discussed, there is a similar use in the curse statement of 2:2g.[160] Second, the call for the "cutting off" of the offender is in connection to the "polluting" (חלל) of the Lord's holiness (קדשׁ) in 2:11c. This semantic reversal was also seen in the curse statement in 2:2f where "blessings" are "cursed."[161] Third, the reason for this declaration is connected to semantics of Relations, as it results from unfaithfulness between spouses, and Liturgy, as the person to be "cut" is bringing (נגשׁ) an offering (מנחה) to the Lord. These semantics were also present in the previous curse

158. Many blessings and curses are composed without using any technical or specific terms but are usually accompanied by an explanation of what they entail. See, Anderson, *The Blessing and the Curse*, 31. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. ארר.

159. See, Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 339; Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Marriage and Divorce in Malachi 2:10-16: An Ethical Reading of the Abomination to Yahweh for Faith Communities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35 (2014): 5.

160. As was the case with the 3fm "it" being cursed in 2:2g, this is a reference to the whole situation. The accusation is that Judah is bringing an offering while being actively unfaithful and polluting the holiness of the Lord.

161. To pollute (חלל) is semantically opposite to making holy (קדשׁ). Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. חלל.

declarations.[162] All these factors would link this declaration to the curses in the previous units and thus lend weight to interpreting it as a curse statement.

This curse in 2:12ab is uttered by an unknown speaker and directed towards a איש (man) who does (עשה) it (a feminine singular, literally "her").[163] The identity of this man is expanded using two descriptions: ער וענה and מאהלי יעקב. The construction ער וענה is very obscure, but "the difficulties of this phrase are exegetical rather than textual."[164] A possible parallel to an Arabic phase has been proposed, conveying a sense of totality.[165] Other commentators also side with the opinion that the phrase signifies a sense of totality.[166] The phrase is translated in the Babylonian Talmud as fathers and grandsons, seemingly also conveying the idea of totality.[167] The construction מאהלי יעקב would literally translate "from the tents of Jacob." This should not be taken literally but in a figurative way, meaning all the inhabitants of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem (1:2a, 1:2g, 2:11ab). Thus, the object of the curse here is much wider than in 1:14 where the offeror is targeted, or in 2:2-3 where the priests are targeted. Here the curse applies to any person, great or small, from the people of God who while offending the Lord also presents an offering to the Lord.[168]

The third feminine singular in 2:12b acts as a general reference to a situation just discussed, as was the case in 2:2g. The person is cursed because of acting treacherously towards his brothers (2:10c), polluting the covenant of the fathers (2:10d), acting treacherously (2:11a), doing abomination (2:11b), and polluting the holiness of the Lord (2:11c). All these actions are combined in the action of marrying pagan women (2:11e). The curse is also connected to the "two things" that the Judeans are presented

162. In 1:14 the relationship is between a king (מלך) and a subordinate. The liturgical aspect is seen in the term sacrifice (זבח). Based on 1:6, the relationship in 2:2 is between a father and master towards his son and servant. The liturgical aspect is seen in the term festival (חג) in 2:3b.
163. As was the case with the curse statement in 1:14, the Lord is not the speaker as he is referred to in the third person (2:12a).
164. Gelston, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, 150. Nonetheless, 4QXII[a] does present a variant reading (עד וענר). Russell Fuller, "Text-Critical Problems in Malachi 2:10-16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 51.
165. "An interesting parallel from the Arabic is afforded by the phrase, 'there is not in the city a caller, nor is there a responder,' meaning that none have been left alive." Hinckley G. T. Mitchell, J. M. Powis Smith, and Julius A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 50.
166. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary*, 362; Clark and Hatton, *A Handbook on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 415; Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 85.
167. Michael L. Rodkinson, *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: Original Text, Edited, Corrected, Formulated and Translated into English* (Boston: The Talmud Society, 1918), sec. bSanhedrin 240, bSabbath 102; Jonathan M. Gibson, "Cutting Off 'Kith and Kin,' 'Er and Onan'? Interpreting an Obscure Phrase in Malachi 2:12," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014): 519–37.
168. Both the *yiqtol* (עשה) in 2:12b and the participle (נגש) in 2:12c may indicate a present or continuous situation.

as doing (עשׂה). They act unfaithfully towards their brothers and wives and cover the altar of the Lord with tears (2:13b) while at the same time they cover their garments in violence (2:16c). It is this shameless attitude of blatant sin combined to the offering of gifts (2:12c) that the Lord so strongly rebukes in a curse statement.

In this curse statement we can also see an analogy to Leviticus 19:8. Only in these two passages we find the phrase קדשׁ יהוה plus the terms חלל and כרת. In Leviticus, the offense is clearly a cultic one. Here in Malachi, the offense is primarily ethical and relational and only secondarily cultic. Nonetheless, the punishment is the same. This goes to support what was already mentioned about the importance of ethical aspects in the book of Malachi.

Semantics of cursing are used here to express disapproval of the actions of anyone who pretends to serve the Lord while living in conflict with others. The curse is primarily motivated by ethical concerns.

The fourth curse statement in Malachi appears in 3:9a. This is the second curse statement by the Lord. As in his first curse statement in 2:2-3, this curse is preceded by a command.[169] The Lord commands the sons of Jacob to שׁוב (return) to him (3:7a). The first position *yiqtol,* in 3:7d, expresses the Lord's desired outcome, that he could return to the second plural. The construction, although it does not formally correspond to a conditional statement, in practice does communicate a condition. The return of the second person to the Lord conditions his return to the second person. This is also seen in the parallel structure of the text. Both clauses contain a form of the root שׁוב, the particle אל, and a personal pronoun. If 3:7c-d indeed presents a conditional construction, this would constitute another parallel to the curse statement of 2:2-3, where an apparent conditional statement is immediately followed by a condemnation. Here, the use of participles in 3:9a-b implies that the curse is already in effect in the text.

In response to the question of the sons of Jacob (3:7g), the Lord utters a question and a declaration. The question in 3:8a presents the terms אדם and אלהים immediately next

169. There are six imperatives in the book. In 1:8e the Lord commands the priests to present a gift to the governor. In 1:9a an unidentified speaker commands the priests the seek the face of the Lord. In 3:7c the Lord commands the sons of Jacob to return to him. In 3:10a and 3:10c the Lord commands the sons of Jacob to bring all the tithes and test him. In 3:22a, the Lord commands a second plural, presumably the sons of Jacob, to remember the instruction of Moses. In 2:2 no imperative form appears. But there is reference to a definite מצוה (commandment) that was given to the priests.

to each other, as if to highlight the contrast.[170] The concept of God (אל) as creator was already present in 2:10b, but it was combined there with the idea of God as father. Other terms were used in the text in relation to humans, עם (people) in 1:4h, man (איש) in 2:10c, and woman (אשה) in 2:14c. But the term אדם is no doubt used here with the intention of highlighting the created–creator dichotomy. The declaration of the Lord presents a strong accusation. Previously in the text, sons, servants, priests, and people in general are presented as not giving to the Lord what he deserves, whether honor, fear, proper sacrifices, or faithfulness. But here אדם, the creature, is presented as actively stealing (קבע) from the Lord. In this sense, the break in relationship here appears worse than all others before.

Despite its briefness, this curse appears more severe and broader in application than all previous curse statements. Here the root ארר is used twice, once as a noun (מארה) and once as a participle. As was mentioned before, the definite noun מארה is used only in Malachi (2:2-3, 3:9) and Deuteronomy 28:20. This creates an analogy between these passages that may serve to highlight the gravity of the statements in Malachi.[171] The use of the participle of ארר implies that the state of being cursed is active and ongoing, and not just threatened and decreed as in 2:2-3. As the second person is presently robbing God, as indicated by the participle of קבע (rob), so they are also presently being cursed. As long as one activity continues, the other does as well.

The severity of this curse is also seen in the emphatic use of personal pronouns, the presence of analogies, and in the escalation of the offense. Second plural and first singular pronouns are used, and all are fronted. The people themselves are cursed because they themselves are robbing God. Besides the analogy to Deuteronomy, there is an analogy to Proverbs 22:23. Only in Malachi and in Proverbs is the root קבע used. There, the Lord appears as one who will rob those who rob the weak and poor. Here, the Lord presents himself as presently being robbed by those who do not bring tithes and offerings. Thus, the Lord identifies with the priests, the Levites, and the poor, who would otherwise benefit from tithes and priestly portions. The escalating offense is seen, when comparing this curse statement to the previous ones. In 1:14 the offense is to give a blemished offering. In 2:2-3 the offense is not giving honor. In 2:12 the offense is acting treacherously. But in 3:9a-b the offense is taking, robbing, from the

170. The relation between creator and creature was not included in the list of relationships because it is not a human relation, i.e., it is not a metaphor stemming from a human relation. Also, this relation is mentioned only here in the text. So, although the text is making a real contrast between two real entities who are in relationship, a separate label was not assigned in the present study.

171. The label analogy is being used here so as to not entertain any discussion about which work predates the other. Other common labels used when describing intertextuality include echo, allusion, and quote. See, Emmer Chacon, "Intertextualidad: El Uso de Éxodo 34:6-7 En El Antiguo Testamento," *Theologika* 34 (2019): 7–8.

Lord and his people. Here again we can see the intersection between ethical and liturgical issues in Malachi.

The broadness of the curse is seen in the addressee, a second person plural. The curse of 1:14 was directed towards particular offenders which most likely excluded the priests. The curse of 2:2-3 was directed towards priests. The curse of 2:12 was directed towards any person, great or small, who pretended to serve the Lord while aggravating others. This curse, nonetheless, is directed towards a second plural (3:9a), which refers to all the sons of Jacob (3:6bc), who are described as הגוי כלו, the whole nation (3:9c).[172]

Statements of cursing have enlarged incrementally in the book. Here the semantics of cursing are used to express increasing disapproval and the increasing reach of those impacted by divine punishments. Ethical and cultic issues are interconnected in such a deep way that they result in the strongest curse statement in the book so far.

The first statement of blessing is in 3:10e-12b, following immediately after the last statement of cursing. Although there are two statements having semantics of blessings in Malachi, this is the only real statement of blessing. As will be discussed later in the text, the second one is ironic and does not represent an actual declaration of blessing. Semantics of blessing are present here, primarily through the noun form of ברך (bless) in 3:10f and אשר (bless) in 3:12a.

The issue of tithes and offerings reveals once more the mingling of cultic and ethical concerns in the text. The Lord identifies the בית האוצר (house of the treasure) in 3:10a, which is presumably empty, as ביתי (my house) in 3:10b, which should be provisioned with טרף (food). God and his people are intimately connected. To rob people is to rob God and to give to people is to give to God. This mingling of concerns is the reason for the longest passage about blessings and curses in the book. Previously, successively intensifying curses have been announced because of wrong behavior. Now blessings are also offered as an extra incentive for change.

This statement of blessing by the Lord follows closely his previous curse statement in 2:2-3.[173] The similarity is evident in the constructions employed and in the reversal of the threats issued. As in 2:2-3, here, we find a conditional statement. The conditional nature of this blessing is seen through the use of the construction אם־לא

172. The people are described as גוי. In Malachi the er mis used for nations that hold God's name as great (1:11[a], 1:11d) and fear him (1:14g), but in other portions of the Hebrew Bible the term usually designates pagan nations. Here the term is used to designate God's people, a people who are actively robbing him.

173. As was mentioned before, the curse statements in 1:14 and 2:12 are not issued by the Lord.

in 3:10e, and the use of a first position *yiqtol* (פתח in 3:10e) followed by *w^eqatal*-forms (ריק in 3:10f, גער in 3:11a, אשר in 3:12a), as is usual in conditional constructions. Also, similarly to 2:2-3, there is an order or command before the conditional statement. Here, there is a double imperative. They must בוא (bring) all (כל) the tithe (3:10a), since all (כל) the nation was robbing (3:9c), and so בחן (test) the Lord (3:10c).

Unlike 2:2-3, both protasis and apodosis pertain to the Lord. There, if the priests did not hear, the Lord would curse. There is a contrast between positive and negative actions. Here, if the Lord would not open the windows of heaven (3:10e), then, he would empty out a blessing (3:10f), rebuke the eater (3:11e), and nations would call them blessed (3:12a). There is no contrast, as both actions are positive. Thus, even though formally, 3:10e should contain the protasis, in practice this is found in the response to the double imperatives in 3:10a, c. The direct speech markers, in 3:10d and 3:11d, are added for emphasis, but do not break the conditional nature of the statement.

If the Lord's conditions are met, the ברכה (blessing) will come into effect (3:10f). This consists in the opening of the windows of heaven, rebuking the eater resulting in fruits not spoiling, and vines not being barren. Furthermore, nations will call them blessed and they would be a land of pleasure.

Similar to 2:2-3, after the curse there is a statement elaborating what the curse entails. Here, after the announcing of the possibility of blessings, there is a statement elaborating what the blessing entails (3:11-12). But opposite to 2:2-3 where blessings (ברכה) are cursed (ארר), this blessing (ברכה) is presented as a complete turnaround of previous curses and negative situations in the text.[174] Before doors (דלת) are called to be closed (1:10b), now windows (ארבה) are to be opened (3:10e).[175] Before, the seed of the priests

174. Curse reversal is seen as a feature of covenants of the Ancient Near East. This reversal is also seen as part of the covenant as presented in Deuteronomy 30. See, Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 289; Mark Allen Hahlen and Clay Alan Ham, *Minor Prophets: Volume 2, Nahum-Malachi*, College Press NIV Commentary (College Press Publishing Company, 2006), 568.

175. The phrase ארבות השמים (windows of heaven) also appears in Genesis 7:11, 8:2, and 2 Kings 7:2, 19. In Genesis it refers to rain. In 2 Kings it seems to refer to supernatural provision. The use in Malachi seems to be closer to the use in 2 Kings.

(2:3a) was to be rebuked (גער), now the eater (3:11a) is rebuked (גער).[176] Before, they offered things (1:14d) that were spoiled (שׁחת), now their fruit (3:11b) would not spoil (שׁחת), Before, nations (גוי) are praised while Israel is condemned (1:11a, 1:11d), now (3:12a) nations (גוי) call Israel אשׁר (blessed). Before, the Lord (1:10d, 13g) was not pleased (חפץ), now Israel becomes (3:12b) a land of pleasure (חפץ).[177] The completeness of the curse turning into blessing is seen in the use of the terms heaven (שׁמים) in 3:10e and earth (ארץ) in 3:12b, encompassing all the created order.[178]

Despite the present state of cursedness in the text, semantics of blessing present an alternative. Semantics of blessing are used to present the possibility of the withdrawal of divine displeasure. This would result in a state of harmony and fruitfulness.

The second statement of blessing is in 3:15a. Here a second plural אשׁר (blesses) the זד (insolent). This declaration does not entail a change from blessedness to cursedness, as in 2:2-3, or from cursedness to blessedness, as in 3:10-12. This statement of blessing serves to challenge the Lord, as it reverses his declarations.

In 1:4f-h, those whom the Lord did not choose had been declared as רשׁעה (wicked) and even though they would בנה (build), the Lord would הרס (tear down). But here the doers of רשׁעה (wickedness) are said to be בנה (built up). In 3:10b the children of Jacob are invited to בחן (test) the Lord and, as a result, they would be called אשׁר (blessed) in 3:12a. But here, the זד (insolent) also בחן (tested) the Lord (3:15c) and they מלט (escaped).[179] So, going contrary to the divine words, the second plural declares (3:15a) the insolent (זד) as blessed (אשׁר). On top of that, they affirm that they have שׁמר (kept) God's precepts and have הלך (walked) before the Lord (3:14de), although the Lord has

176. This is presumably something that damages the "seed." From the two previous references to seed in Malachi, at least the one in 2:15d can unequivocally be seen as a symbolic seed or offspring. The reference in 2:3a is ambiguous. This reference in 3:11 seems to refer to literal seed, i.e. harvest. The verb גער is also considered part of the vocabulary of cursing in the Hebrew Bible. See, Jan Joosten, "The Verb גער 'to Exorcize' in Qumran Aramaic and Beyond," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 21 (2014): 351. The rebuking, i.e. cursing of the eater, results in blessing for those who trust in God. See, Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Hypocrisy in Stewardship: An Ethical Reading of Malachi 3:6-12 in the Context of Christian Stewardship," *HTS Theological Studies* 70 (2014): 7. Hurowitz proposes that אכל be translated as "caterpillar" or "larva." Victor Hurowitz, "'KL in Malachi 3:11--Caterpillar," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 327–30.

177. Niccacci also contrasts the title "land of delight", given to Jacob/Israel, with the title "land of wickedness", given to Esau/Edom. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 96.

178. As the declaration of curse in 3:8 seems analogous to that of Deuteronomy 28:20, the declaration of blessing in 3:10 seems analogous to Deuteronomy 28:12. In 3:10 God commands the people to bring the tithe to the storehouse (אוצר), so that he can open (פתח) the heavens (שׁמים) and bless His people. In Deuteronomy 28:12, God promises to open (פתח) his storehouse (אוצר) in the heavens (שׁמים) to bless his people.

179. The *wayyiqtol* form of the verb attempts a break into the narrative world. In this way the text purports to indicate a real event accomplished in time.

said they have not kept (שׁמר) his statutes (3:7b) and have not walked in the way but have departed from it (2:8a). To them it is שׁוא (useless) to עבד (serve) the Lord (3:1b).

Semantics of blessing are used here to indicate a challenge to the Lord by means of an ironic twist of his blessing in 3:12a.[180] Instead of the obedient being blessed, it is the insolent who receive that description. This declaration of blessing expresses the frustration of the second person, as the promises of the Lord seem not to have been fulfilled.

The last passage that contains semantics of cursing is 3:24d. This is seen through the use of חרם (destroy) and the reversal of the blessing in 3:12ab.[181] Similarly to the last curse statement by the Lord, this one is also conditional. The conditional construction is seen in the use of the particle פן (lest) and the sequence of *yiqtol* (בוא) in 3:24c and *w^e^qatal* (נכה) in 3:24d.[182] The personal involvement of the Lord is clearly seen as both verbal forms contain a first singular marking.

In a similar way to the blessings of 3:10e-f, both protasis and apodosis pertain to the Lord. Furthermore, there was no contrast there, as both actions were positive. Here there is no contrast as well, as both actions are negative. Furthermore, as clause 3:10e should contain the protasis, but in practice this was found in the response to the imperatives that preceded it, here, although formally the protasis should be in 3:24, it is actually found in the response to the imperative of 3:22a, supported by the *w^e^qatal* in 3:24a. The second person must remember the Torah (תורה) and return (שׁוב) to the Lord. This is the last possibility for the fulfilment of the command in 3:7a, to return to God, and the promise in 3:18b, to return and see the difference between the righteous and wicked.

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180. There might also be an allusion to 2:1a through the use of the particle ועתה. There the Lord had warned the priests that if they did not שׁמע (hear) they would be cursed (ארר). Here the second plural declares having שׁמר (kept) the requirements of the Lord, but this is seen as שׁוא (useless). The terms שׁמע and שׁמר are semantically equivalent.
181. Many consider חרם as curse terminology. If the desire for the destruction of some individuals in 2:12 is seen as a curse statement, then surely the threat of destruction of the whole earth should be seen as a curse statement. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. חרם; Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. חרם; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32:342; Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 302; Reeder, "Malachi 3:24 and the Eschatological Restoration of the 'Family,'" 699. For a general discussion of the term חרם see, John P. U. Lilley, "Understanding the Ḥerem," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993).
182. This is the first time in the text that a first person appears as בוא (coming/bringing). The term has always been used before in conjunction with second or third persons designating the bringing of sacrifices or offerings (1:13, 3:10), the coming of the messenger of the covenant (3:1), and the coming of the day of the Lord (3:2, 19).

This curse statement has as object the ארץ (earth). This is a complete reversal of the previous blessing in 3:12ab, where the ארץ was to be described as חפץ (pleasurable) and אשר (blessed). Semantics of cursing are used here to indicate the possibility of final destruction. The intention is not to portray a change from blessedness to cursedness, but a change from cursedness to destruction.

Semantics of blessings and curses are used in the book of Malachi to indicate divine pleasure or displeasure and the possibility of change in divine disposition, depending on the response of the people to divine demands. After possible changes from blessedness to cursedness, and vice versa, there is a possibility of total destruction.

Justice

Semantics of justice are present in the text, primarily through the roots שׁפט (to judge) and צדק (to be just).[183] The root שׁפט is used on three occasion (2:17h, 3:5a, 3:22c), always in a noun form. This root is usually translated as "justice", but it also encompasses other aspects of government, which in modern designations would include legislative, executive, and judicial facets.[184] To שׁפט would refer to all actions involved in mediating between and ruling over parties, so that a state of shalom results.[185] Thus, although the term is introduced in 2:17h, the issue of justice is in no way a new topic in the book, as the concept of God's proper judgement and rulership over his people is behind most other issues raised in the book. The root צדק is also used three times, twice as a noun (3:3f, 3:20c) and once as an adjective (3:18b). This root would indicate conformity to a rule, assumedly God's rule.[186] But it is also considered as conformity to any rule, even societal expectations.[187] In Malachi, צדק is directly connected to the Lord, as the צדיק is described as one who serves the Lord (3:18b). Other terms from the semantic field are present, such as רע (evil) in 2:17f, טוב (good) in 2:17eβ, עד (witness) in 3:5b, רשׁעה (wickedness) in 3:15b, and רשׁע (wicked) in 3:18b, 3:21a.

As was mentioned, the first use of שׁפט is in 2:17h. Here the Lord reports the speech of a second plural, as seen in the phrase באמרכם (by your saying) in 2:17d. The unit starts with a divine complaint or accusation about the דבר (words) of a second person plural (2:17a). The Lord presents the second person as presenting a triple accusation.

183. For a discussion of social justice and ethics and how the message of Malachi can apply to present communities of faith, see, Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Malachi's Concern for Social Justice: Malachi 2:17 and 3:5 and Its Ethical Imperatives for Faith Communities," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70 (2014): 9.
184. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. משׁפט.
185. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. שׁפט.
186. Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. צדק.
187. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. צדק.

First, they said that the doers (עשׂה) of evil (רע) are regarded as good (טוב) by the Lord (2:17ef). Second, they said that the Lord delights (חפץ) in the evil doers (2:17g). Third, they openly questioned (איה) the existence of a God who rules (2:17h).

Interestingly, all these terms have been used previously to indicate the Lord's judgement of the actions of his people. In regard to the first accusation, the people of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem have been charged with doing (עשׂה) abomination (2:11b) and doing (עשׂה) hypocritical worship (2:13a). This results in a curse being unleashed on the ones doing (עשׂה) those abominable practices (2:12b). The lexeme רע (evil) is used twice in 1:8b and 1:8d, where the Lord condemns the sacrificial practices of his people. In regard to the second accusation, in 1:10d and 1:13g the Lord declares in no uncertain terms his displeasure (חפץ) towards his people and their faulty offerings. Finally, in regard to the third accusation, in 1:6d and 1:6f, it was the Lord who interrogated (איה) as to the why of the absence of honor and fear due to him.

It would thus seem that unit 2:17a-h is a climactic statement on the part of the Lord, attempting to describe the attitude of a people who, while accused of wrongdoing, do not accept the correction, but rather rebel against divine rule. The use of the particle או in Malachi seems to support this interpretation. The particle occurs only two times in the book and it does not appear to have a disjunctive function, but rather a conjunctive and even a summative one. In 1:8g it serves to build upon, and not oppose, clause 1:8f. There, the construction seems to indicate a progression from an inward feeling of pleasure to an external action of rewarding. Here in 2:17h the particle appears to build upon, rather than oppose, clauses 2:17e-g. The construction seems to indicate a progression from an expression of dissatisfaction in regard to God's judgement, to a declaration of his delight in wrongdoers, to a questioning of the actual existence of a God who judges.[188]

The discontent of the people could possibly be understood if we consider that they were operating under the assumption that as long as sacrifices were made, blessings would come. They may have viewed sacrifices from a magical framework.[189] That would explain their surprise at God's rejection. The lack of divine acceptance then led to think that God was unjust, when in reality God was just operating on a different

188. The introduction of the current complaint about God's justice raises an interesting question. In a text in which the Lord has been continuously accusing others of not acting properly, who is it that accuses the Lord of not acting properly himself and why does he say that? The next section of this study, the communication analysis, should offer a satisfactory answer.

189. For an interesting discussion of magic, karmic, and animistic views and how those may have affected Malachi's audience, see, Jerry Hwang, "Syncretism after the Exile and Malachi's Missional Response," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20 (2016): 49–68.

set of presuppositions. God's actions were based on a relationship with his people. For God, actions alone, such as the offering of a sacrifice, were not the end, the motives behind those actions were. Did the people truly intend to honor God? How did they show that? Why were they returning or not their tithes? Understanding those questions would lead them to understand why God had not destroyed them and why the wicked were prospering. Divine justice would be demonstrated by God's intervention to cleanse his people. God demonstrated his justice in waiting for them and not giving them what they deserved. People could not twist God's arm through ritualistic acts.

Semantics of justice are used here to express the frustration of a second plural and the challenge of the Lord's dealing with those who do evil. By extension, his dealing with those who do right is also challenged.

As a reply to the challenge in 2:17a-h, the Lord announces a series of actions. He will send (שׁלח) a prophetic messenger (3:1ab), and a God-related messenger will come (בוא) to his own temple (3:1c) to purify (טהר) and refine (זקק) the sons of Levi (3:1g).[190] In this way, the escalating accusations of the second plural seem to be met by the escalating actions of the Lord. The result of these actions is that, for the first time in the text, the offerings of God's people are presented in a positive light. The sons of Levi are presented as able to bring (נגשׁ) offerings (מנחה) that are righteous (צדק), i.e., according to God's regulations (3:3f).[191] Furthermore, Judah and Jerusalem are now able to present an offering (מנחה) that is sweet (ערב) to the Lord (3:4a).[192] If we recognize the term ערב as isotopically related to חפץ we can see the actions of the Lord are indeed in reply to the accusations of the second plural. He is not pleased by evil (רע), but by righteousness (צדק).

Following the activities of the messenger of the covenant, in 3:5a the Lord himself approaches (קרב) the second plural for judgement (משׁפט).[193] The judgement of the Lord is described as his serving as a witness (עד) against a long list of offenders: sorcerers, adulterers, false witnesses, oppressors of workers, widows, and orphans,

190. For an exploration of the concept of temple in Malachi and how it relates to the eschatological hope, see, Boloje and Groenewald, "Malachi's Vision of the Temple: An Emblem of Eschatological Hope (Malachi 3:1-5) and an Economic Centre of the Community (Malachi 3:10-12)."
191. God's purpose was to restore the covenant with Levi. Wielenga, "The Delay of the Day of the Lord in Malachi: A Missional Reading," 4.
192. Previously, Judah and Jerusalem were involved in abomination (2:11b), but now their offering is accepted.
193. The term קרב is a synonym of the terms בוא and נגשׁ, but in many cases קרב has the added weight of judicial connotations. The connection with נגשׁ can be seen in 1:8e, where priests are challenged to bring (קרב) an offering to the governor in the context of bringing (נגשׁ) subpar offerings to the Lord (1:8a, 1:8c). See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. קרב.

and oppressors of foreigners.[194] The same root is used in 2:14c where the Lord serves as witness (עוד) on behalf of shunned wives. On the surface, the concern of the Lord there can be perceived as ethnocentric or even xenophobic, but, as was already discussed in that unit, ethical issues are at the heart of the matter. Here as well, a deep ethical concern is manifested, including concerns for the wellbeing of the poor and of foreigners.[195]

All offenders are described as those who do not fear (ירה) the Lord (3:5d).[196] This root has been used before with regards to the priests, who were presented as those who do not fear the Lord (1:6f). In contrast, Levi (2:5bc) and even pagan nations (1:14g) did fear the Lord. Notice here that all offences, perhaps with the exception of sorcery, are offences against other people and not directly against the Lord. Thus, to fear (ירא) God is not to oppress the weak. Once again, the text of Malachi evidences a deep blend of ethical and cultic concerns.

Semantics of justice are used here to present the Lord's reaction to the charges of the second person. The actions of the Lord in sending his messenger, then the actions of lord and messenger of the covenant, and the coming of the Lord himself, serve to bring about צדק and שׁפט.

The claims of the second person do not stop after the Lord's actions. The semantics of justice are reintroduced in the text through the term דבר (words) in 3:13a and 3:13d.[197] They affirm they have kept (שׁמר) the instructions of the Lord (3:14d) and have walked (הלך) before him (3:14e). Nonetheless, they complain that it is pointless and profitless to serve (עבד) God (3:14bc). On the other hand, in 3:15b they affirm that עשׂי רשׁעה (doers of wickedness), who parallel the זד (insolent), have been בנה (built up). For this reason, they declare the זד as אשׁר (blessed). These accusations seem a repetition and elaboration of those presented in 2:17e-h, where the second plural questions the existence of a just God.

194. Clause 3:5 may be analogous to Deuteronomy 27:15-26, where curses are called upon those who withhold justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow (27:19), idol worshipers [sorcerers?] (27:15), those who move boundaries and lead the blind astray [false witnesses?] (27:17-18), and those who have illicit sex [adulterers?] (27:20-23).
195. Snyman comments, "That the alien is mentioned here is remarkable when one takes the previous part into account, where marriages with foreign women are denounced." Snyman, "A Theological Appraisal of the Book of Malachi," 607. For Wielenga, justice for the immigrant was an integral part of waiting confidently for the eschatological day. Wielenga, "The Gēr [Immigrant] in Postexilic Prophetic Eschatology," 7.
196. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 360.
197. It was the דבר of a second plural that introduced for the first time the semantics of justice in the text (2:17a).

The identity of the second plural, although not specified in the text, can be explored through the terms employed in the speech. The term עבד was used before only in 1:6b, where servants are assumed to always honor their lords. Given the isotopic relation between שׁמר, עבד, and הלך, the declaration in 3:14b can be seen as an indirect declaration on the part of the second person, of also having served God. The only character present in the text who has שׁמר (kept) the instruction of the Lord is the ideal priest of 2:7a. Furthermore, the only character who הלך (walked) with the Lord was Levi, in 2:6c. Thus, it seems that the second plural is either blatantly contradicting the Lord and negating his accusations or is somehow to be identified with Levi and righteous priests. In this latter case, the second plural could represent a group of people who, while not in rebellion to the Lord, do find themselves disillusioned in his service and doubtful about his dealings.[198]

Semantics of justice are used here to present a second round of accusations against the Lord. A clearer picture of those who contend with the Lord begins to appear.

The first round of accusations regarding the justice of the Lord was met by his actions. This second round of accusations is met by a new character in 3:16a, the יראי יהוה (fearers of the Lord).[199] These characters are introduced here without any further description or identification. Two details can aid in their identification. First, they are presented as ירא (fearing) the Lord. This must stand in clear opposition to the long list of offenders who are labeled as those who לא ירא (do not fear) the Lord (3:5c). Furthermore, ירא is what the Lord has been demanding all along (1:6f). Second, they are presented as speaking (דבר), presumably in concern about the words of the second plural (3:14b-15d). The termדבר has been used before by a second plural entity in 2:17a, 3:13a, and 3:13d, to present their complaints and challenges about the justice of the Lord.[200] The connection between the fearers of the Lord and the second person seems confirmed in 3:18a, where they themselves appear to be addressed as a second person.

The speaking of the fearers of the Lord is introduced by using the particle אז, which is a temporal marker (3:16a). This seems very appropriate as the unit contains the last and longest narrative-like passage in the book.[201] In response to the concern of the

198. By the same token, the second plural in 2:17a-h may not be enemies of God, but rather disillusioned servants of God.
199. This title is used only in Malachi 3:16 and in the book of Psalms (15:4, 22:23, 115:11, 13, 118:4, 135:20).
200. דבר also appears in the heading of the book (1:1b). But that use is of no concern here, as it is not related to semantics of justice.
201. *Wayyiqtol*-forms are used in 1:2g, 1:3b, 2:5b-c, and 3:15f.

fearers of the Lord, God is presented as having heard (קשב) and listened (שמע),[202] and having a memorial book written about them.[203] Furthermore, in view of the day of the Lord (3:17c), they are promised to be protected as treasures,[204] and spared like anyone would do with a son who serves (עבד) his father (3:17gh). The simile serves to express that God is a father and that the fearers of the Lord are his sons, and they serve him. Here there is confirmation that the fearers of the Lord and the second plural who claims to serve (עבד) the Lord (3:14b) are the same entity.

Those who fear the Lord are also promised to be able to clearly distinguish (ראה) between the צדיק (righteous) and the רשע (wicked). This promise to see (ראה) was the very first in the book and is now here repeated (1:5a). The parallelism in the text shows clearly who is the צדיק (righteous), the one who עבד (serves) God. The רשע (wicked) is the one who does not.[205]

Identifying the second person who questions God's justice, as those who fear the Lord, helps explain why, even though their words are described as wearing the Lord (2:17a) and strong (3:13a), they are not condemned as wicked, and no punishment is meted out. Rather, each episode of complaining is followed by great promises. The first round of complaints is met with promises of the coming of the messenger of the covenant.[206] The second round of complaints is met here with promises of remembrance and protection.

Semantics of justice are used here to promise the fearers of the Lord that he will certainly make a distinction between those who fear and serve him and those who do not.

The terms זד (insolent) and עשה רשעה (doers of wickedness) are used in 3:19c to introduce the way in which the Lord will make the distinction between those who serve him and those who do not. Here these terms are used synonymously. This was

202. The reaction of the Lord stands in clear contract to the reaction of the priests who did not 2:2) שמעa).
203. Nogalski considers that this book is potentially the scroll of the Twelve, whose contents would help people to distinguish between the just and the unjust. See, Nogalski, "Recurring Themes In The Book Of The Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading," 134–35. Note that in the book of Isaiah, it is the enemies of God who seem to be the subject of God's writing activity. See, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Writing and (Not) Reading the Torah (and Contrasting Texts) in the Book of Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 (2019): 3.
204. The term סגלה designates carefully guarded personal property and is used several times to describe the Lord's ownership of Israel. See, Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. סגלה.
205. The parallelism is seen in the use of the particles בין and ל in 3:18b-d.
206. As the second plural is identified, at least in part, as those who fear the Lord, the remarks of the Lord about their בקש (seeking) and חפץ (desiring) the lord and messenger of the covenant (3:1d, 3:1f) are not to be seen as sarcasm, but rather as a statement of facts.

already seen when the second plural declared the זד (insolent) as blessed (3:15a) and the עשׂי רשׁעה (doers of wickedness) as built up (3:15b). Here the Lord presents the way in which the promise of 3:18b will be materialized. The distinction between the רשׁע and the צדיק is obvious. The wicked are set ablaze by the coming day (3:19d) and become ashes under the soles of the feet of the fearers of the Lord (3:21ab).[207] The righteous are healed (3:20cd) by the sun of צדקה (righteousness). Both figures, the day and the sun, relate to fire but the results are vastly different.

Semantics of justice are used here to describe how the Lord will finally be vindicated. The concern for justice in Malachi is primarily related to the relation between the Lord and those who serve him, in comparison to those who do not. Ethical and societal issues do appear in relation to semantics of justice, but do so as supporting elements, serving to demonstrate the correctness of the Lord when dealing with others.

Terms previously related to semantics of justice appear in the conclusion of the book. A second person plural (see the personal pronoun in 2:23a), is commanded to זכר (3:22a) the teaching of Moses, עבד of the Lord. The only other use of זכר is in 3:16e where the second plural is told that a book of remembrance was written about those who fear the Lord. As they are remembered by the Lord, they need to remember the instructions of Moses, a true servant (עבד) of the Lord (3:22a). Besides the use in the initial argument of the book about sons and servants (1:6b), עבד has always been used in the context of discussions about the justice of the Lord. The second plural has declared itself to be a servant of God (3:14b) and has been promised to be able to clearly see the difference between righteous and wicked, those who serve God and those who do not (3:18b-d). The root שׁפט is also used (3:22c), but it is not connected here to semantics of justice, but to semantics of covenant.

The last use of semantics related to justice seem to exalt those who, according to biblical traditions, experience the justice of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord

The term יום (day) is used eight times in Malachi. On two occasions it refers to days of old. These days are referred to, both positively, as in the days when offerings were acceptable (3:4a), and negatively, as in the days of the fathers when they would depart from the statutes of the Lord (3:7a). The other six uses of יום refer to an eschatological day (3:2a, 3:17c, 3:19a, 3:19d, 3:21b, 3:23a).

207. The fearers of the name of the Lord are equaled by metonymy to the fearers of the Lord (3:20b). See, Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated*, 608. This identification is confirmed in 3:20ab, where the fearers of the name of the Lord are addressed as second plural.

Clause 3:2a introduces the semantic line of an eschatological day to the text of Malachi.[208] The parallelism between clauses 3:2a and 3:2b begins to reveal some of the characteristics of this day. In both clauses we find a conjunction, an interrogative particle, a singular participle, an infinitive construct, and a third singular suffix. Clearly, those who endure (כול) are those who stand (עמד). In the same way, the day of his coming (בוא) refers to his appearing (ראה). The term בוא has been used before to indicate the bringing of improper sacrifices (1:13e) and the coming of the lord to his temple (3:1c). Thus, the term seems to imply a real physical action. This coming is also described as a sighting (ראה). The term ראה has been used before only in 1:5a, where it seems to designate the physical ability of sight. Thus clause 3:2a is not an announcement about the coming of a day but rather describes the literal coming of someone which will also be physically visible.

The logical question is then, who is the third singular that both infinitive constructs refer to? This third singular appears also in 3:2c, where it is compared to fire (אֵשׁ) and soap (ברית). More details about the third singular are revealed in clauses 3:3a, 3:3c, and 3:3d, where he is seen as sitting (יֹשֵׁב), purifying (טהר), and refining (זקק). Again, these are all actions accomplished by a person and not by an immaterial concept as a day. The immediate reference to the third singular in 3:2a-c is the messenger of the covenant of 3:1c-f. The emphasis of the text is not on describing the day but the activities of the one coming on that day.

The terms יום and בוא appear together again in 3:19a and 3:19d. Unlike 3:2a which focuses on the coming of the messenger of the covenant, here the emphasis of the text is on the coming of the day itself. Using the particle הנה plus a participle, the imminent coming (בוא) of the day (יום) is announced (3:19a). The certainty of the coming is seen in the repetition used to renominalize the event in 3:19d: it is היום הבא (the coming day). This day is described using several terms related to fire: בער (burn) and תנור (oven) in 3:19b, קשׁ (stubble) in 3:19c, להט (kindle) in 3:19d, and אפר (ashes) in 3:21b. The result of this day is the complete destruction of the wicked; it leaves them neither roots nor branches (3:19g).[209]

Previously, the words הנה and בוא appear together only in 3:1g, where the imminent coming of the messenger of the covenant is announced. The coming (בוא) of this messenger is also announced in 3:2a. His person and work are also described by using terms related to fire: אֵשׁ (fire) in 3:2c, צרף (refine) in 3:3a, and זקק (purify) in 3:3d.

208. This is considered a main theme in the Book of the Twelve. Onoriode lists several studies on the topic. See, Boloje and Groenewald, "Malachi's Eschatological Day of Yahweh," 53.
209. See, Wielenga, "The Delay of the Day of the Lord in Malachi: A Missional Reading," 4.

The result of the work of the messenger is the cleansing of the sons of Levi and their being able to present offerings in צדקה, righteousness (3:3f).

Thus, the terms בוא and הנה are used to announce both the coming of the messenger of the covenant and of the eschatological day. Also, both the messenger of the covenant and the day are described by using imagery related to fire. Nonetheless, the results are different. In the same day there is refiner's fire for God seekers, but complete destruction for God forsakers.[210] The coming of the messenger of the covenant results in צדקה for the sons of Levi. The coming of the day results in destruction for the wicked. It would seem then that the coming of the messenger of the covenant and the coming of the day refer to the same event from two different perspectives. On that day when the lord (אדון), who is equal to but somehow different from the Lord (יהוה), reveals himself (3:2b), some will be cleansed and some will be consumed.[211]

These different outcomes in the day for different entities are also seen in the use of the phrase היום אשר אני עשה (the day which I am making). This phrase is used in 3:17cd and 3:21bc. In the context of 3:17c-d, the Lord offers to protect (3:17e) those who fear him (יראי יהוה) as a treasure (סגלה),[212] and to חמל (spare) them (3:17f). The result will be that the difference is seen between the righteous and the wicked (3:18b). This, no doubt, implies protection for one group and destruction for the other. Similarly, in the context of 3:21b-c, the fearers of the name of the Lord (יראי שם) will experience the appearing of the sun of righteousness (שמש צדקה), which brings healing (3:20cd). The wicked, on the other hand, will be turned to ashes; presumably by the same sun (3:21b).

The last use of the term יום is in 3:23a. Here for the first time the day is qualified: it is the day of the Lord (יום יהוה). A new character, אליה (Elijah), is introduced in connection to the day and his sending is said to happen before theבוא (coming) of the יום יהוה (day of the Lord). This day is presented as גדול and נורא. These terms are only

210. Wielenga, "The God Who Hates," 3.
211. Nogalski, "Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading," 127. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," 6. This interpretation is different from that of Wielenga, who seems to see the function of the messenger as preparing people to receive the Lord, and thus delay the day of the Lord. The successful action of the messenger would result in a delay in the eschatological day of the Lord. The events are seen as different. See, Wielenga, "The Delay of the Day of the Lord in Malachi: A Missional Reading," 5.
212. The noun סגלה is used seven other times in the Hebrew Bible. It always refers to a valuable position. Five times the Lord refers to Israel as his treasure (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18, Psalm 135:4). Twice kings refer to their monetary treasures (1 Chronicles 29:3, Ecclesiastes 2:8).

used previously in connection to the greatness of the Lord. Here they are used in connection to his day.[213]

Semantics of the day of the Lord are used to refer to a final reckoning, when a clear distinction is seen between the righteous and the wicked. Semantics of the day of the Lord are closely connected to those of the greatness of the Lord and of justice. It is on the final day when the greatness and the justice of the Lord are established.

Blessing and Cursing as a Unifying Device

This review of semantics in Malachi has identified and discussed nine semantic lines in the book: love and hate, relationships, the greatness of the Lord, liturgy, covenant, messenger, blessing and cursing, justice, and the day of the Lord. From these, six semantic issues are present in the two main parts of the book and thus constitute its semantic thrust, namely: relationships, covenant, messenger, blessing and cursing, justice, and the day of the Lord. The other three semantic lines, love and hate, the greatness of the Lord, and liturgy, serve to support them. From the main semantic issues in the book, blessings and curses seem to be an effective means to bring the other lines into a coherent whole.

Semantics of blessing and cursing feature prominently in the book from a syntactical point of view. They are present in units 1:6a-2:9c, 2:10a-16f, 3:7a-12c, 3:13a-15, and 3:23a-24d, which are part of the major divisions of the book. The use of a potentially final curse statement at the very end of the book is highly significant as well. From a semantic point of view, blessing and cursing feature prominently, because they connect to all other semantic lines in the book.

Love and Hate

Semantics of love and hate are used only in two passages in Malachi and the semantics of blessing and cursing appear to be connected to both. The curse statement of 2:12a is uttered against anyone who does two things: first, acts treacherously (2:11ab) and second, while still being unfaithful, weeps because his offerings are not accepted (2:13a-d). The treachery involves polluting the holiness, which the Lord loves (אהב), by marrying pagan women (2:11c-e). The treachery also includes abandoning the native wives, as 2:14d implies. But the Lord is presented as hating (שנא) divorce. Here the terms love and hate are used literally and not figuratively as in 1:2g-3a.

This same curse statement also contains a mention (2:12b) of the tents of יעקב (Jacob). The first reference to Jacob is when the Lord affirms his choosing (אהב) of Jacob and

213. See the discussion on pages 116-120.

rejecting (שׂנא) of Esau (1:2g-3a). Thus, the curse is truly against anyone, small or great, chosen or not, who acts treacherously.

In 3:15b there is another reference to the loving of Jacob and hating of Esau. In the context of declaring the זד (insolent) as אשר (blessed), a second person complains that the עשׂי רשׁעה (doers of wickedness) have been בנה (built up). The only other use of the root is when the Lord elaborates what his hating (שׂנא) of Edom entails. They may desire to בנה (1:4c) but the Lord vows to destroy (1:4g). He furthermore vows to make its territory a גבול רשׁעה (territory of wickedness).

Relationships

Blessings and curses serve to regulate relationships. It is no surprise, then, that all passages dealing with blessing and cursing relate to relationships in the book. In the curse of 1:14a, a cheater is condemned because of bringing (1:14d) a corrupted animal to the אדון (lord). The lord is further described (1:14e) as מלך גדול (great king) who is (1:14g) ירא (feared). In this way there are connections to relations between masters and servants and between kings and subordinates.

The curse in 2:2e-g is directed to the priests (2:1a), who are called to give כבד (glory) to the name of the Lord (2:2c). It was the priests who were compared to sons and servants (1:6h), but were deemed as those who despised the name of the Lord (1:6i).

In 2:12a there is a call for the destruction of someone. This is to be seen as a curse statement. The curse is called against the one who acts unfaithfully (בגד). The text accounts unfaithfulness against brothers (2:10c) and against the wife of the youth (2:14d). Here relations between brothers and between husbands and wives are concerned.

The curse in 3:9a is directed against a second plural. The blessing in 3:10f is directed towards the same second plural. The antecedent is found in 3:6c, the sons of Jacob. So, this curse, and possible blessing, connect to semantics of relationship between fathers and sons.

The ironic or defiant אשר (blessing) in 3:15a is uttered by a second plural and directed towards the זדים (insolent). The second plural complains that it is useless to עבד God (3:14b). The only previous use of the term is in 1:6b, where it refers to the relationship between masters and servants.

The last curse statement of the book is found in 3:24d. Here the Lord threatens total destruction if the hearts of בנים (sons) and אבות (fathers) are not turned to each other (3:24ab). In the immediate context there is also a mention of Moses, the עבד (servant) of the Lord. In this way relationships between fathers and sons and between masters and servants come to the fore. Since the Lord is indirectly presented as Moses' master, he can also be assumed to be alluded in the father and son relationship.

Greatness of the Lord

Three curse statements and one blessing statement are related to semantics of the greatness of the Lord. The curse in 1:14a is justified by presenting God as גדול (great), whose שם (name) is ירא (feared) among the גוים (nations). These are all terms used previously to express the greatness of the Lord (1:5c, 1:11a-d).

The curse of 2:2 also uses the terms כבד and שם (2:2c). These also appear in the semantics of relationships. But their use there is ultimately related to the innate quality of the Lord of being worthy of כבד (honor).

Finally, both the curse and the possible blessing in 3:9a-12b use the term גוי. The sons of Jacob are designated as גוי in 3:9c. In the event that blessings come into effect, all nations (גוי) would declare Israel blessed (3:12a).

Liturgy

This semantic line is present in four curse statements and one blessing statement. The curse in 1:14a is motivated by improper זבח (sacrifices). The curse in 2:2e-g results in covering the priests with פרש חגיכם (the feces of your feasts). The curse in 2:12a is aimed at those who, while being unfaithful, נגש (bring) מנחה (offerings) to the Lord. They are also presented as covering God's מזבה (altar) with tears. The curse in 3:9a is aimed at the whole nation because it is robbing the Lord of מעשר (tithe) and תרומה (priestly portion).

The possible blessing in 3:9a-12b concerns those who heed the call to bring the tithe to God's temple. The term היכל (temple) is not used, but the term בית האוצר (house of treasure) and ביתי (my house) are used to refer to it. The result of the blessing is that the second plural becomes a land of חפץ (pleasure). All these terms have been used before in the semantics of liturgy.

Covenant

Semantics of blessings and curses are very intimately related to the semantics of covenant. It could be argued that blessings and curses exist only since they serve as

guaranties protecting special relations between parties. In that sense, every mention of blessings or curses can be seen as a response to covenantal agreements. Besides this covenantal background to every blessing and curse in Malachi, semantics of covenant appear in the foreground on three curse statements.

The curse on 2:2a-g is preceded by a conditional construction that includes a commandment (2:1a). The express reason for this commandment and the curse that seeks to bolster it is so that the Lord's ברית (covenant) with Levi might stand. Similarly, the curse of 2:12a also seeks to protect covenants. In this case the ברית of the fathers (2:10d), which is being polluted by the unfaithfulness of the brothers (2:10c), and the ברית of marriage (2:14e), which is being broken as men are unfaithful to their wives (2:14d). Lastly, the greatest curse of the book, the irrevocable ban of destruction of 3:24d, is introduced in the context of God's call to have all Israel remember the law of Moses (3:22ab). All previous uses of תורה in Malachi are in the context of the covenant of Levi (2:6a, 2:7b, 2:8b, 2:9c). Nonetheless, the covenant referred to here is not the covenant of Levi, as the analogy to Deuteronomy 5:1 makes clear. Only in these two passages do the terms משה (Moses), חק (statute), משפט (judgment), חרב (Horeb), and כל־ישראל (all Israel) appear together. The event being referred to is the establishing of the ברית (covenant) between God and his people (Deuteronomy 5:2). The final threat is therefore put forth as a last attempt to protect the covenant between God and his people.

Semantics of covenant appear only in three of the seven passages dealing with blessings and curses. Nonetheless, all the aspects of the semantics of covenant are addressed: the covenant with Levi, the covenant of the fathers, the covenant of marriage, and the covenant between God and his people.

Messenger

Semantics of blessings and curses and the semantics of a messenger connect in subtle ways. Only on two occasions do these semantic lines touch. As was already mentioned, the curse of 2:2e-g is directed to the priests and was uttered so that the covenant with Levi might continue. According to Israelite traditions, all priestly functions were confined to the sons of Levi. Thus, priests are warned so that they, as descendant of Levi, can continue to minister. The expectation of the text was that they would serve as מלאך (messengers) of the Lord (2:7c). This expectation is not realized in the text.

The second touch between semantics of blessings and curses and those of a messenger is in 3:23a. Here the coming of Elijah is promised. The success or failure of his mission depends on the fulfilment of the curse in 3:24d. Elijah is announced using the

same vocabulary as the מלאך in 3:1a. Furthermore, the coming of Elijah is said to happen before the יום יהוה (day of the Lord). There is a close correlation between the day of the Lord and the מלאך הברית who does a work of purifying on that day. Furthermore, the מלאך הברית corresponds to אדון, who in turn corresponds to יהוה. This correlation between the day of the Lord and the messenger of the covenant, which corresponds to the Lord, explains why both are described as גדול (great) and נורא (feared).

Justice

In a similar way to the case of semantics of covenant, blessings and curses are deeply connected to semantics of justice. Blessings and curses serve to execute or express a desire for the execution of divine justice. In that sense, all declarations of blessing or curse can be seen as connected to issues of justice. Nonetheless, we will note three occasions when the two semantic lines formally touch.

The possible blessing of 3:10c invites the sons of Jacob to בחן (test) the Lord and as result (3:12b) become a land of חפץ (delight). The text does not report their carrying out of that action. The זדים (insolent), though, have בחן the Lord, and escaped unharmed (3:15d). This is the reason for the ironic אשר (blessing) of the second plural in 3:15a. Furthermore, they declare (3:15b) that the Lord builds up the עשׂי רשׁעה (doers of wickedness) and delights (2:17g) in them (חפץ).

The curse in 3:24d is preceded by a call to זכר (remember) Moses the עבד (servant) of the Lord (3:22a). The only other use of זכר refers to a memorial on behalf of those who fear the Lord in contrast to the doers of wickedness (3:16e). Besides the use in 1:6b, all subsequent uses of עבד have been in the context of the justice of the Lord towards those who serve him (3:14b, 3:18b-d).

The Day of the Lord

Semantics related to the day of the Lord are introduced towards the end of the book. Nonetheless, semantics of blessing and curses are also connected to it. The ironic אשר (blessing) in 3:15a, and the break in relation it manifests, spur those who fear the Lord to manifest their support toward him. This results in a promise of protection on the day of the Lord's making (3:17c-d, 3:21b-c). This is the same as the coming day (3:19a, 3:19d), which is finally identified as the Day of the Lord in 3:23a.

This Day of the Lord (3:23a) has been described as a time for the purifying of some (3:2a) and the destruction of others (3:19g). It is the response of fathers and sons that will determine whether the threat of destruction is carried out or not.

Implications of a Semantic Analysis of Malachi

Discourses, similar to narratives, have a flow or direction. This is what makes the communication intelligible. A semantic analysis would show this progression by an ordering of semantic lines sequentially, hierarchically, or both. The semantic analysis of a text starts by observing the semantic lines present in different sections, as revealed by syntactic analysis. As semantic lines are present or absent in the main sections of a text, the main semantics lines are uncovered. Secondary lines support and complement main lines. But main semantic lines also support and complement each other.

The present semantic analysis of Malachi has shown how blessing and cursing, having touched all other semantic lines in the book, seem to play a major role in bringing the different semantics lines in the book cohesively at the end.

The basis for all interaction between humans and God in the book is determined by relationships. The Lord is presented as father, master, and great king. This multifaceted relation is regulated by a covenant.

The charges against God's justice raised by his covenant people will eventually be solved when the messenger of the covenant acts on his day. The solution resides in the blessing of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked on that day. Blessings and curses are presented as the natural consequence of proper or improper relations to God. In this way, blessings and curses regulate the relationship between the Creator and his creatures. It could be said that blessings and curses constitute the content of the relation between the divine and the created; they are what the relation is about. If creatures relate properly to the divine, blessings unfold. If creatures relate improperly to the divine, curses unfold. Blessing and cursing are used to give the punchline of the book. Repent or perish. Be blessed or be cursed.

Chapter 4

COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the communication analysis of the book of Malachi. Here we will analyze the pragmatic aspects of how the TIA manipulates the characters to convey meaning. We will also analyze the communication between the TIA and the TIR.

When analyzing communication at the level of characters, we will first note who is addressing who, both in direct speeches and embedded speeches. We will also attempt to describe where the speaker is located in the text, as well as the moment of speaking.

When analyzing communication at the level of the TIR, we will describe how the TIA manipulates the implied reader to involve him in the text. We will list the techniques used by the TIA, ranging from having the TIA as a passive witness, to having him actively seek the implementation or realization of unresolved issues in the text beyond its boundaries.

The study of the communication at the level of the characters and at the level of the implied reader was done sequentially. Nonetheless, for the sake of readability and to avoid repetitions, the results of these studies will be presented in a unified way. The discussion will proceed unit by unit.

Malachi 1:1a-b

The introduction to the book of Malachi is only two clauses long. Despite its briefness it does serve to identify the book as divine revelation. It also contains noteworthy elements from a communicative perspective.

A heading functions on the communicative level of the TIA and the TIR. It serves as a kind of paratext, giving the TIR information needed to properly understand the text.[1] In this case the heading introduces the key characters in the text.

The first character mentioned by the TIA is יהוה, the Lord. He is described as the source of the message or word that is to be communicated. The mention of this character before the others may serve to highlight his importance and preeminence in relation to the other characters. As will be seen later, the character Lord is the driving force behind most of the communication in the book.

The next character introduced by the TIA is ישראל, Israel. This character is presented as the destinatary of the message or word of the Lord. Given the absence of any other description, it is unclear yet for the TIR, whether this serves as a reference to the

1. Himbaza, “Masoretic Text and Septuagint as Witnesses to Malachi 1:1 and 3:22-24,” 100.

individual patriarch of Israelite traditions, or to any of the kingdoms of the people said to descend from him.[2] In case "Israel" refers to the people, this creates the opportunity for the TIR to identify himself with this group and so become himself the destinatary of this prophetic message.

The last character introduced by the TIA is מלאכי, Malachi. As was discussed before, this noun is to be taken as a proper name and not as a title. The prophetic message or word from the Lord is said to come ביד ("by the hand of") Malachi. In this way, the TIA as the speaker of the heading, indicates that Malachi fulfils the prophetic role of transmitting God's message. In other words, the TIA, who is traditionally identified as Malachi, introduces a character named Malachi to serve as a prophetic figure, the communicative bridge between the Lord and Israel.[3] Consequently, the character Malachi is to be considered as the discourser in the text, the unidentified prophetic voice marking speeches and uttering a few unmarked speeches. The words of Malachi would, thus, carry much communicational impact towards other characters and for the TIR.[4]

There are four compelling reasons to consider Malachi to be the prophetic voice, or discourser, in the text. First, after the heading the TIA does not introduce the character Malachi again. The word מלאכי appears again in 3:1a, but there it is used as a title, my messenger, and not as a proper noun, Malachi. Given the appearance of the character Malachi in the heading, we can safely assume that it must have a function towards the TIR. Furthermore, the TIR would expect to see this character again. It would be pointless to introduce a character in the heading of a text and then have him absent in the rest of the work.

Second, if Malachi is taken as a title and therefore the Lord is assumed as the speaker, the Lord would be referring to himself in the third person. This is unlikely, but certainly possible. Nonetheless, if the Lord is the speaker here, he would be functioning in the role of the TIA; not just momentarily and for communicational purposes, but in effect he would be designated as the TIA of the text. This would go against the natural usage of the rest of the book, as the Lord repeatedly appears in marked speeches. The Lord, as TIA, would repeatedly refer to himself in the third person in the introduction or marking of his speeches. That would be highly unlikely and highly improbable. It seems better to consider the TIA, named Malachi, as

2. The dating of the book of Malachi and the historical identification of characters are not relevant to a synchronic analysis of the text, so they are not mentioned here. For a discussion of those issues, see, Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32:298.
3. Cf. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 216.
4. See, Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 21A:224.

introducing a prophetic character named Malachi. This prophetic character functions as the designated TIA of the text.

Third, if neither Malachi nor the Lord are to be considered the prophetic voice in the text, the TIA would be directly introducing characters and would be the speaker of all the unmarked speeches in the book. He would therefore also likely be directly addressing the TIR in those speeches. This would be highly unusual.

Fourth, there is a precedent in the book of the twelve where the phrase ביד (by the hand of) is used in the heading of a book to introduce the prophetic voice of the text, the discourser. The phrase is used in Haggai 1:1 to introduce Haggai the prophet. The same phrase is subsequently used in Haggai 1:3 and 2:1 making clear that the character Haggai is the prophetic voice in the book.[5]

Despite the presence of characters, there is no direct communication happening between the characters in the heading. No character is addressing another, rather the communication is said to happen through the prophetic figure, Malachi. In other words, the communicative process between the Lord and Israel is not direct, but rather indirect as it happens through the mediation of Malachi.

Despite the scarcity of biographical information, the headings of most of the books in the collection of the Twelve identify the prophetic voice in the book by his ancestry, occupation, or some other detail.[6] The heading of Malachi gives no such information for the TIR. Other information not provided for the TIR relates to location and time.

There is no indication in the text as to the location of the speaker of the heading.[7] Knowing that the character Malachi is present and active in the book, while at the same time he is not identified and presented "on stage", would mean that he would be closer to the world of the TIA than to the world of the characters. It appears that the TIA chooses to use the prophetic figure Malachi as a mouthpiece to speak directly. In this sense, there seems to be a fusing between the prophetic figure and the TIA.

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5. The phrase ביד is also used in Joel 4:8 and Zechariah 4:10, 12, 7:7, 12, 11:6. In those cases it appears in the text and not in the heading of the books. For a discussion of superscriptions in the Book of the Twelve, see John D. W. Watts, "Superscriptions and Incipits in the Book of the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SBL Symposium Series 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).
6. See, Hoshea 1:1, Joel 1:1, Amos 1:1, Jonah 1:1, Habakkuk 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Haggai 1:1, and Zechariah 1:1. "It is an obvious fact that the biographical information given in the Twelve is next to none." Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire, *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, 7.
7. In the collection of the Twelve, only three books indicate the location of the prophetic voice. See, Amos 1:1, Micah 1:1, Nahum 1:1.

This fusing between the character Malachi and the TIA, coupled with the absence of a time marker, would create a close connection to the TIR.

There is also no indication of time since there are no verbal forms in the heading.[8] This creates the illusion of a present moment in the text. The absence of verbs naturally focuses the attention of the TIR on the characters, as there are no actions to focus on. He is expected to wait for the message of the Lord that will come through Malachi. This "timeless heading" would also facilitate a close connection between the TIA and the TIR.

As is usual in headings, the TIR is addressed by the TIA. By the omission of many elements usually found in headings, the TIA creates the possibility of a very intimate communicative setting towards the TIR. There is no description of who the prophetic voice is, who specifically he is talking to, where he is, or when he is speaking. All these markers are to be taken from the frame of refence of the TIR. The scarcity of information provided to the TIR in the heading leaves us with two questions: first, will the TIA provide more information to the TIR as the text progresses? Second, if more information is given, how will that impact the TIR?

Malachi 1:2a-5c

The main text of Malachi starts with a direct speech by an unidentified speaker towards an unidentified second plural addressee (1:2a). In clause 1:2b the TIA reveals who the speaker is: the Lord. The Lord remains the speaker in most of this unit, being introduced as the speaker again in 1:2f and 1:4e. In these speeches the Lord addresses an unidentified second plural (1:2a).

The briefness and abruptness of the declaration of love in 1:2a impacts the TIR. But the content of the divine speech in Malachi is not new to the tradition of the Hebrew Bible. The theme of the love of God for his people is well represented in prophetic literature.[9]Assuming both the final form of the book of Malachi and the Hebrew

8. Several other books in the collection of the Twelve have clear time markers. See, Hoshea 1:1, Amos 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Haggai 1:1, and Zechariah 1:1.
9. See for example, Deuteronomy 7:8, 13, 23:5; Isaiah 43:4; Jeremiah 31:3. Several scholars maintain that the text of Malachi contains many words, phrases, and literary and theological themes that are intentionally analogous of those of other books of the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomy in particular. See, Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 166–67. Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 39. J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets*, Exploring the Old Testament (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 4:266. Leuchter, Hutton, and Society of Biblical Literature, *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, 202; Joan E. Cook, *Hear, O Heavens and Listen, O Earth: An Introduction to the Prophets*, A Michael Glazier Book (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 262.

Scriptures, the TIR, although located in the book of Malachi, has access to the rest of the sacred text.[10]

The identity of the second plural who is loved will, nonetheless, continue to be unclear for most of the unit. Only at the end will the identity be explicitly shown. This uncertainty as to the addressee of the direct speech in 1:2a is highly significant from the perspective of the communication between the TIA and the TIR. Who is this entity that is loved by the Lord?

The TIR would naturally regress to 1:1b, where the Lord is presented as having a message for Israel. If this is a reference to the people of God, there is a possibility for the TIR to identify with them and be himself included in this group of those who are loved by the Lord. It is only after the TIR has felt the force of the declaration of love that the TIA gradually reveals who the addressee is.

The character Lord eventually identifies the second plural by relating them to Jacob (1:2e, 1:2g), who was loved as the unidentified second plural is loved (1:2a). According to the Hebrew Scriptures, a character identified as Jacob was chosen by the Lord over his brother Esau. This tradition is here used by the Lord as evidence of his love for the second plural. The second plural is obviously not Jacob from the traditions. So, the second plural must be somehow connected to Jacob so that the reference would be meaningful. As the Lord chose Jacob in the past, and therefore rejected Esau, in the present he continues to show that election by the destruction of the descendants of Esau, namely Edom.

This would confirm the assumption based on the heading that the second plural would refer to Israel, descendants according to the traditions of the Patriarch Jacob.[11] The stories of the individual characters Jacob and Esau are used as parables to illustrate the present conditions of the collective characters Israel and Edom.[12] This contrast between Israel and Edom is also seen in the double use of the term אמר in reference to Edom (1:4a) and Israel (1:5b). Similarly, the term גבול is also used in reference to Edom (1:4h) and Israel (1:5c). That the second plural is to be seen as referring to the nation and not to an individual can also be seen in their use of the first plural when referring to themselves (1:2d).

10. For a critical discussion of textual layers in this unit and their dating, see Bacon, "'I Loved Jacob, but Esau I Hated' Textual Relationships and Development in Malachi 1."
11. Krause, "Tradition, History, and Our Story: Some Observations on Jacob and Esau in the Books of Obadiah and Malachi," 482.
12. See, Ian Young, "Collectives: Biblical Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

The words of the second plural, the people of Israel, are introduced by the Lord in 1:2c. The speech of the second plural is embedded in the speech of the Lord. The text does not present a conversation between characters. Rather one character, the Lord, is presenting the words of the other character, the second plural. The fact that it is the Lord who introduces the speech of the second-plural entity is clear by the use of a second person pronoun by the second-plural entity when addressing the Lord (1:2d). If the speech of the second plural was introduced by the TIA the text would read, "how has he loved us?." But since it is the Lord directly addressing the second plural and reporting their speech, they ask, "how have you loved us?." As with Israel, the Lord introduces an embedded speech by Edom in 1:4a. Unlike Israel though, the Lord does not address Edom, but just refers to them. These initial exchanges set the tone for the rest of the book. As will be evidenced, there are no actual dialogues between characters in the book of Malachi.[13]

The location of the character Lord can be deduced from the references to Edom and the contrasts with Israel. The general location of the character Lord, as he interacts with the second person, must be in the vicinity of Edom, the traditional habitation of the descendants of Esau. The Lord refers to Edom's mountains (1:3b), as well as to the ruins that remain after a devastation caused by the Lord (1:4d). Furthermore, the Lord is addressing Israel. Thus, we might infer that in this first unit of Malachi the Lord is to be located somewhere in the territory of Judah overlooking the territory of Edom.

The direct speeches of the Lord, and the staged communication in them, are presented as past events in this unit. In the case of Jacob, the Lord presents himself as having loved him. This is portrayed as a past event both from the discursive perspective, by the use of a *qatal* verbal form (1:2a), and the narrative perspective, by the use of a *wayyiqtol* verbal form (1:2g). The time perspective in the text begins to change in the discourse about Edom. Here, an abundance of modal *yiqtol*-forms begins to point to a present moment in the text. The *qatal* in 1:4b, nonetheless, still anchors the events in the past. Moreover, this speech is syntactically dependent on 1:2e-3c which presents a past perspective.

The elements of time in the text impact how the TIR relates to the communication in it. After probably choosing to include himself among the second plural who are loved

13. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 72. Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 9; James D. Nogalski, *Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), 156. Contra, Boloje and Groenewald, "Perspectives on Priests' Cultic and Pedagogical Malpractices in Malachi 1:6-2:9 and Their Consequent Acts of Negligence," 382. They argue that the verbal interchanges in Malachi are discussions in which two opinions are recorded but one is given more space than the other.

by the Lord, the TIR is subsequently present as a discursive witness in most of this unit. He hears how the Lord addresses the people of Judah and tries to persuade them of their love for them. He sees the ruins of Edom and considers how these testify of the Lord's preference for Israel.

The unit finishes with an unmarked direct speech (1:4h-5c) by Malachi, the unidentified prophetic voice in the book, and is addressed to a second plural, presumably the children of Israel, those descended from Jacob. The speech is about two characters: Edom, who is referred to using a third plural pronoun (1:4i), and the Lord who is present as a third person (1:4i).

This concluding speech is presented in the now moment of the text, as indicated by the three modal *yiqtol*-forms in 1:5a-c. Since this speech is syntactically independent from the previous one, the *w^{e}qatal* in 1:4h does not mirror the temporal perspective present there. This would by itself create a possibility for the TIR to become again more directly engaged in the communication. Moreover, the now moment of the text would link this concluding speech to the heading of the book where there is a very intimate communicative setting between the TIA and the TIR.

The identity of the second plural can be further discerned by their embedded speech in the words of Malachi (1:5c). In this embedded speech, the second plural are invited to eventually declare or proclaim the greatness of the Lord beyond the border of Israel. The expression "beyond the border of Israel" denotes nonetheless a possible distinction between the second plural, the character Israel, and the location understood to correspond to this character. If the character Israel and the location of the character in the text would match their expected location, the second plural would be invited to declare the greatness of the Lord "beyond our border" and not "beyond the border of Israel." In other words, the character Israel seems to be located by the TIA outside of the territory of Israel. If this perception is correct, it would create a sense of distance between the Lord and Israel in the eyes of the TIR. It would create the perception of a separation. This separation already seemed evident in the challenging attitude of Israel, "how have you loved us" (1:2d) to the declaration of the Lord, "I have loved you" (1:2a).

In the heading, the TIR can have access to the divine message by identifying himself with Israel, the destinatary of the divine message. In this first unit the TIA uses different techniques to invite the TIR to actually take the step and identify with Israel. Through the delayed identification of the second plural, the TIR has been made to wonder whether he is the one loved by the Lord. Through the description of the past acts of God, the TIR has been made to witness the reality of the divine love. And now

through the concluding speech of Malachi, the TIA expresses his desire that the TIR would not question the love of God, but rather acknowledge the greatness of the Lord. He does this through the reintroduction of the character Israel.

This reintroduction of the term Israel, previously used in the heading, serves to connect to it and create an opportunity for the TIR to become engaged with the text. The TIA wants to link back to the very intimate communicational setting towards the TIR. The present perspective of the text would make this possible again here. Also, through the use of the subtle differentiation between the actual and the expected location in the text of the character Israel, the TIA creates an openness that can be understood by the TIR as meant to include him. The TIR is thus subtly invited to identify himself with Israel or along with Israel and be part of those who are loved by the Lord and are called to declare his greatness. Both the character Malachi and the TIR will expectantly wait to see what the actual words of Israel will be in the future.

Malachi 1:6a-2:9c

This block is formed by three units: 1:6a-8h, 1:9a-14g, and 2:1a-9c. Before analyzing the units individually, we will identify the speaker and addressee of this block. We will also discuss how this identification impacts the TIR.

In the speeches presented in this block, the Lord, an unidentified first plural, and an unidentified character are presented as speakers. They all address a second plural. This second plural is introduced in the first unit as the priests (1:6h). The second unit continues to address a second plural (1:9a). Since no new information has been given, this second plural must be assumed to continue to refer to the priests. Supporting this assertion is the fact that the second plural is called to perform actions consistent with the identification of priests (1:10a-c), and the way they are described (1:12a-13h) parallels the way priests were described in the first unit (1:6j-8h). The third unit makes explicit again the identification of the second plural as priests (2:1b). Thus, the priests are the main addressees in this unit. But this does not mean that they are the only addresses. As will be seen later, a “cheater” and the TIR are also addressed in the text.

As was mentioned, this block presents three possible speakers. The Lord is the only speaker in the first unit (1:6a-8h). An unidentified first plural, the Lord, and an unidentified character are speakers in the second unit (1:9a-14g). The third unit features the Lord and an unidentified character as speakers (2:1a-9c). Since the Lord is present as speaker in all units, it seems natural to see him as the speaker of this block. Nonetheless, all the speeches of the Lord in this block are marked. This indicates that the Lord is being introduced in the text by another character which is

on a higher syntactical level. In other words, the Lord is shown as the speaker of his embedded speeches, but he is not the speaker of the block. The speaker is the entity introducing the speeches of the Lord.

Either the unidentified first plural or the unidentified speaker in the block could be the entity that introduces the speeches of the Lord, as both deliver unmarked speeches. The unidentified speaker appears twice in the block (1:14a-g, 2:7a-c) and the first plural speaker appears once (1:9b). The unidentified speaker appears in asyndetic (2:7a) and non-asyndetic clauses (1:14a). The first plural speaker appears connected to a macro syntactical sign (1:9a). However, the difference between the unidentified character and the unidentified plural character is blurry. After all, the unidentified speaker is not labeled as singular or plural and so there is nothing in the text indicating that the character in 1:14a-g and 2:7a-c is different from the character in 1:9b.

Besides the fact that the first plural and the unknown speaker might be the same entity, other aspects also give priority to the first plural in the text. The first unmarked speech in the block is given by the first plural character. Moreover, this speech is syntactically more prominent than the later speeches by the unknown speaker. Similarly, the first plural is slightly more defined in the text than the unknown speaker, who is not defined as singular or plural. These aspects make the first plural more prominent than the unknown speaker. Thus, this block (1:6a-2:9c) should be considered as spoken by a first plural and addressed to a second plural, the priests.

The question of the identity of the first plural remains. In many languages a single entity, such as a king, can present itself as a plural entity, for the sake of rhetorical emphasis. So, it may be argued that Malachi is presenting himself as plural entity seeking such rhetorical effect. Nonetheless, a more natural and plausible use for a first plural is to represent more than one entity. In this scenario, who would these entities be? There seem to be at least three possible explanations: first, a first-plural entity already present in the text; second, multiple prophetic entities, such as other prophets besides Malachi, or Malachi and his disciples; and third, Malachi and others, perhaps those who have heeded his message. Let us briefly discuss these possibilities for the identification of the first plural.

In the case of the "royal we", the use of a plural by a single entity, many argue that it is an artifact of later languages but not a feature of biblical Hebrew usage.[14] This usage also seems to be absent in the rest of the book.

As for previous first plurals, there have been three first plurals identified in the text: Jacob/Israel (1:2d), Edom (1:4b) and the priests (1:6h, 1:6k). Identifying the first plural here as Jacob/Israel seems plausible. The whole people of Israel, the addressees of the book, may be seen here as calling the priests to seek God. Nonetheless, there are syntactic and semantic reasons that seem to render unviable the identification of the first plural with a plural Israel character.

This entity appears in an unmarked speech. So far, only the prophetic voice in the text has appeared in an unmarked speech.[15] Here, as in the first block (1:2a-5c), the TIR expects to see the prophetic voice in the text, Malachi, behind the unmarked speeches. The character Israel does not seem to be on a communicational level that would enable it to appear unmarked in the text. Furthermore, the character Israel has been previously presented as antagonistic to the Lord. For these reasons it does not seem appropriate to equate the first plural to Israel. To identify Edom or the Priests as the first plural also seems out of the question for similar syntactic reasons. Furthermore, Edom has been discarded already by the Lord and the priests are the ones indicted in this unit.

As for a plurality of prophetic entities, there seems to be no indication of that in the text. It appears then, that the first plural here is to be identified with Malachi and some we-group. From the previous plural entities in the text, Jacob/Israel seems to be the best fit. Since the book is addressed to this entity and the initial communication from the Lord was about loving Israel, the TIR has been conditioned to expect the character Israel to react and respond to the communication of the Lord, hopefully in a positive way. This identification of the we-group as Israel is, nonetheless, tentative for the TIR who expects a clarification later in the text.

Having identified the overall speaker in this block as Malachi together with a we-group, possibly Israel, and the second plural addressee as the priests, let us now deal with the units individually. The first unit (1:6a-8h) starts with a speech about a son (1:6a) and a servant (1:6b), but these are not the addressees. The speaker is presented as a first-person singular (1:6c) who is identified in the marking of the speech as the Lord (1:6g). It is only after the Lord has complained about the lack of honor and fear

14. According to Reshef, the majestic or royal 'we' "has not taken root in Hebrew. In Biblical Hebrew it does not exist at all." Yael Reshef, "Pluralis Majestatis: Modern Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
15. Eventually the character Lord will also appear in unmarked speeches. See for example, 3:1ab.

given to him that the addressee is introduced. It is a second plural (1:6g) identified as priests (1:6h) who despise the name of the Lord (1:6i). This delay to introduce the identification of the addressee impacts the TIR in two ways: those who are presented as bad sons and servants are the priests, the religious leaders of the community. Second, their problem is not only passive, by not giving honor and fear, but also active, in despising the name of God.

The unit continues with an interchange between the Lord and the priests in 1:6j-8h. This interchange nonetheless is staged and not actual. The Lord remains the speaker. The Lord introduces the words of the second plural (1:6j, 1:7b), quotes their supposed replies as embedded speeches (1:6k, 1:7c), and responds to their replies (1:7a, 1:7d-e). Clause 1:7e is an embedded speech where the Lord presents the purported words of the priests. It is not another reply by the priests, but it is part of the Lord's answer to the question, "how have we defiled you?" in 1:7c. That the Lord has remained as the speaker is further seen in the direct addresses to the priests in second person and not in the third person, i.e., the priests are introduced as a second plural, not as the priests. Lastly, the words of the priests are introduced, but the words of the Lord are not introduced in any way. These features deviate from what would be expected if a third party were to narrate a dialogue between two characters, thus proving that the Lord has remained the speaker and no actual interchange or dialogue has occurred.

The staged interchange between the Lord and the priests climaxes in 1:8a-h. Here the Lord uses two parallel questions to expose the wickedness of the defective sacrifices offered by a second plural (1:8a-b, 1:8c-d). Since there is no hint of the introduction of a new character, this would refer to the priests, as has been the case in this unit so far. The emotional charge of the speech raises by the issuing of a challenge by the Lord and by the shift from a second plural to second singular addressee (1:8e). The challenge is not directed to priests in general but to each individual priest. Again, as there is no indication of any change in the addressee, the change from second plural to second singular should be seen as a rhetorical device that seeks to increase the force of the speech.[16]

The Lord's speech ends with a second double question (1:8f, 1:8g). These questions are also addressed to the individual and parallel to be pleased (1:8f) with the lifting of the face (1:8g).

16. Changes in person and number are best understood as literary and rhetorical techniques that seek to express a theological point. Chacon, "A Divine Call to Relationship and a Covenantal Renewal in Deuteronomy 28:69-30:20: A Syntagmatic, Syntactic and Textlinguistic Analysis," 274–75.

The TIR observes as the Lord proves his accusation to the priests. He further sees that despising the name of the Lord (1:6k) and defiling the Lord (1:7c) are parallel, and thus refer to the same. The use of questions by the TIA communicates to the TIR the deep indignation of the Lord. The TIA considers that the TIR is able to answer the double question posed to the priests. The TIA designs the TIR to side with the Lord in all his questioning of the priests. He is to conclude that it is not right to offer defiled sacrifices and that if an earthly ruler would not put up with such gifts, much less should the Lord.

The second unit in this block (1:9a-14g) starts with a short but poignant unmarked speech (1:9a-d). The macro syntactical marker (ועתה) in 1:9a serves to call the attention of the implied reader to the speech given by an unidentified first plural (1:9b) and addressed to a second plural (1:9a). The first plural entreats the second plural to seek God so that the first plural, and possibly also the second plural, are benefitted. Since no new information has been given, the second plural must be assumed to continue to refer to the priests. The scarcity of information about the first plural would force the TIR to identify them as the prophetic voice and others or some new character yet to be identified in the text.

Although the TIR does not know for sure who the first plural represents, one thing is clear for him: the first plural has an ambivalent relation towards the second plural, the priests. Initially the first plural seems to identify with the priests, as their entreating the Lord may be successful and result in benefits for all.[17] But then the first plural marks distance from the second plural by highlighting that the corrupt offerings came from their (not "our") hands and expressing doubt that the Lord would actually accept them, (not "us"). The TIR is expected to initially include himself in the first plural and call the second plural to repentance. But he is also expected by the TIA to then side with the first plural and conclude that it is right for the first plural to break with the second plural and to conclude that the priests' transgression is too great to be forgiven.

The rest of this unit consists of two speeches by the Lord and a curse statement by an unknown speaker. The first speech of the Lord (1:9e-13d) begins with the expressing of his desire for someone from the priests to close the doors of the Temple, so that improper sacrifices cannot be performed (1:10a-c). The speech continues with assertions by the Lord that he is not delighted nor pleased with the gift from the hands of the second plural (1:10d-g). The transgression of the priests is especially grave in the eyes of the Lord since he considers that the nations do bring appropriate sacrifices

17. See, Redditt, "The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting," 245.

(1:11a-e). The Lord remains the speaker and finishes this speech by presenting two purported embedded speeches of the second plural (1:12c-d, 1:13b). These two declarations by the priests resemble the two declarations in 1:6k and 1:7c. The dialogue is here, as was the case there, staged. These are the reported words of the second person plural spoken not to the Lord, but about the Lord (1:12c).

The words of the Lord would convince the TIR that indeed the Lord does not accept the gifts that are coming from the hands of the priests and that he was correct in siding with the first plural, since the Lord is certainly not pleased with the priests. He will not lift their faces (1:9d). Nonetheless, the TIR is made to see that either some of the priests are considered righteous by the Lord and would heed the call to close the doors of the Temple, or at least the Lord considers that some of them may repent from their actions and heed the call. Otherwise, no call would be given. However, the words of the Lord about the nations confuse the TIR. The universal greatness of the Lord is known to the TIR, since he has access to other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. But that the rituals of other nations are pleasing to the Lord is a novel idea for him.[18]

In his second speech in this unit (1:13e-h) the Lord accuses the priests of bringing stolen and damaged animals for sacrifice (1:13e-g) and asks them whether they consider he would be pleased with their offerings. The TIR compares these words of the Lord with his questions in 1:8a-d and concludes with the Lord that indeed what the priests are doing is evil.

This conclusion by the TIR has been facilitated in part by the use of questions by the TIA. The characters Lord and a first plural ask questions of the priests. The Lord asks the priests whether a governor would accept a gift like the sacrifices they offer (1:8ef). Then, a first plural asks the priests whether the Lord would accept the offering of their hands (1:9cd). Finally, the Lord himself asks the priests the same question (1:13g). By all appearances, the priests despise the Lord and do not care about their actions. But the questions are an effective means to draw the TIR to agree and side with the Lord.

The last section of this unit is an unmarked curse statement (ארר) uttered by an unidentified speaker and concerns a "cheater" (1:14a), who could give a proper

18. Some scholars solve this problem by seeing the text as metaphorical. See for example, Åke Viberg, "Wakening a Sleeping Metaphor: A New Interpretation of Malachi 1:11," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 297–319.

offering but chooses to give a corrupted animal (1:14bc).[19] This unidentified speaker goes on to introduce a speech by the Lord using the standard formula employed in the book of Malachi (1:14f), צבאות יהוה אמר, and consisting of very similar words to those uttered by the Lord in the previous speech (1:14e, 1:14g). This would indicate that the unidentified speaker is taking the role of the prophetic voice in the text, the character tasked with introducing the words of the Lord. Whether this character represents the first plural of 1:9b or Malachi alone is yet to be seen.

The cheater is also not identified in the text. The *context* of the curse would seem to imply that it refers to the priests. However, the *content* of the curse does not seem to match with a priestly figure. The one cursed is presented as the offeror who brings an animal for sacrifice. Thus, this person is not to be identified with priests who would be the ones officiating the sacrifice. However, the condemnation of the offeror is also an indirect condemnation of the priests who facilitate the offence by accepting and presenting the sacrifice at the altar.

The reason for the curse makes the TIR nuance his understanding of the worship rendered by the nations. They are presented as fearing the Lord (1:14g). This is what was expected in a master-servant relationship (1:6ef). Thus, whether the proper worship rendered by the nations is actual or hyperbolic, it is an expression of their fearing the Lord. As such, it is accepted and causes the rejection of those who do not fear the Lord and have disregarded repeated attempts to have them see the gravity of presenting improper sacrifices.

Regarding the "cheater", the TIR wonders why the Lord curses the one who gives the offering. Since the priests were the ones actually offering improper sacrifices by accepting improper sacrifices, it should be the priests being cursed. On two occasions the Lord has specified that he is not pleased with the offering from "your hand" (1:10g, 1:13g), the hand of the priests. Moreover, the Lord had also called them to close the doors of the Temple and stop kindling his altar for nothing (1:10c). Now the TIR is made to see that the offering of defective animals is more widespread than just by the priests. The priests were responsible for the regular offerings at the Temple. Nonetheless, the judgement here seems to be against a non-priestly offeror. By all appearances, the people were copying the priests in offering substandard gifts in their

19. The root ארר is "mostly used in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. (Deuteronomy 27:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 28:16 [2×], 17, 18, 19 [2×]; Jeremiah 20:14, 15; 48:10 [2×])." In Deuteronomy and Jeremiah 48 the context is punishment following a breach of obligations to God, specifically the covenant in Deuteronomy. This is also the context in Malachi, where failure of required sacrifices results in those responsible being outside the protection and community of the covenant." Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 232–33.

personal sacrifices. A corrupted priesthood had corrupted the community. Through this curse statement the character fulfilling the role of the prophetic voice in the text is communicating to the TIR that not only priests are being considered as unfaithful servants by the Lord. The text is not just about priests. Anyone could become a bad servant in the eyes of the Lord. The TIR must watch himself, lest he also becomes a bad servant who does not fear the Lord.

The third unit in this block (2:1a-9c) contains three marked direct speeches by the Lord. Inserted between the second and the third speech there is an unmarked declaration by an unidentified speaker. The first speech by the Lord (2:1a-2h) is addressed towards a second plural, the priests (2:1b). Here the Lord announces a warning (2:1a-2c) that results in a curse for the priest (2:2e-h). This curse appears to be conditional at first, but is later revealed with a *qatal,* as already accomplished (2:2g).

By now the TIR is solidly on the side of the Lord and, therefore, sees as justified the cursing of the priests. As those who do not fear the Lord, those who do not honor the Lord are to be cursed (1:6d). As the unfaithfulness of the priests impacted and spread to the community, here their unfaithfulness potentially impacts and spreads to their own descendants (2:3a). The TIR is alarmed though for the priests. Since he has access to the Hebrew Scriptures, he knows that the curse that God has called on them is the covenantal curse.[20] Does this mean that the priests are to be utterly destroyed?

The second speech of the Lord (2:3a-6d) is also addressed towards a second person plural (2:3b). In the absence of any indication to the contrary, this second plural is to be seen as continuing to refer to the priests. There are no terms from the semantic field of cursing in this second speech. But there is an imminent direct threat against the descendants of the second plural, who are also threatened with public humiliation. In that sense, this second speech may be understood as an elaboration of the curse statement presented in the previous speech. This second speech of the Lord also presents the rationale for the warning that resulted in a curse, as indicated by the parallel use of the phrase המצוה הזאת (this commandment) in 2:1a and 2:4b. The divine intent was to preserve, and not to destroy, the covenant he had with the priests as

20. The only other occurrence of המארה in the Hebrew Scriptures is in Deuteronomy 28:20. In 2:3a the Lord threatens to גער (rebuke) the seed of the priests. Deuteronomy 28:20 is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where the term מגערת, note the same root, is used. Besides המארה, the term מגערת has also been recognized as a link between Malachi and Deuteronomy. See, Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 262.

descendants of Levi (2:4c).[21] The rest of the speech elaborates on the relationship that existed between the Lord and Levi (2:5a-6d).

The TIR is triggered by the declaration that the Lord will scatter feces on the faces of the priests. This expression causes the TIR to consider that the Lord has completely rejected the priests. Nonetheless, the TIR sees that the Lord has sent the commandment, which resulted in a curse, to maintain and not to abolish his covenant with the priests. Perhaps there could be hope for the priests.

Inserted between the second and third speeches of the Lord there is an unmarked declaration by an unknown speaker (2:7a-c). Once again, this character is taking on the role of the prophetic voice in the text. Similar to the previous speech by the unknown speaker (1:14a-d), whether it is to be identified as the first plural or as Malachi remains to be seen. As no character in the text is addressed, the addressee must be the TIR. The declaration equates a priest with a messenger of the Lord (2:7c).

This address to the TIR serves to convince him that the priests are still not completely rejected by the Lord. They are messengers of the Lord. Whether Malachi is a priest or not, the priests are certainly messengers of the Lord.[22] The curses and threats are really meant to make the covenant with Levi stand (2:4c).

The last speech of the Lord (2:8a-9c) is also addressed to a second plural which continues to refer to the priests (2:8a). In this last speech the Lord contrasts the unfaithfulness of priests with the faithfulness of Levi. The speech ends with a strong and emphatic declaration by the Lord that the priests are to be despised. After offering curses for those who do not fear the Lord (1:14g) or honor him (2:2c), now, as the priests despised the Lord (1:6i), they are to be despised themselves (2:9a). In this way the ending of the unit ties up with its beginning.

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21. Using a very different methodology, Schaper also identifies the priests as the descendants of Levi. Schaper, "The Priests in the Book of Malachi and Their Opponents," 180–81.
22. Several scholars consider the author or redactors of the text to be a priest or to be somehow related to the priesthood. For example, Schaper identifies the author(s) of the book of Malachi with a section of the priesthood. Schaper, 186–87. Weyde considers the author to be a priest or Levite. Karl William Weyde, "Malachi in the Book of the Twelve," in *The Book of the Twelve: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Jakob Wöhrle (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 256. See also, Lester L. Grabbe, "The Priesthood in the Persian Period: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Ancient Near East Monographs 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 154.

The TIR witnesses no replies by the priests in this unit. So, at least from the perspective of the Lord who is controlling the communication, the priests are presented to the TIR as silenced and convicted.

In the first unit (1:6a-1:8h) the Lord seems to be located, at least figuratively, in the courtyard of the Temple. He refers to the altar (1:7a, 1:10c) and the table (1:7e), seemingly another way to refer to the altar. In the second unit (1:9a-1:14g) the Lord appears to remain located in the courtyard of the Temple. References to doors (1:10b), the altar (2:10c), and the table (2:12c), again seemingly another reference to the altar, would seem to indicate this. In the third unit (2:1a-9c) there are no hints as to the location of the Lord, aside from the possible reference to a dung pile outside the Temple (2:3c). In any case, the location of the Lord would still be in the courtyard and around the Temple. This change in the location of the Lord, from a general location in Judah overlooking Edom in 1:2a-5c, to a specific location in the courtyard of the Temple affects the TIR. This setting would be conducive to the communication process, given the Temple was also the epicenter of activity for the priests, the addressees in the unit.

The direct speeches of the Lord in the first unit (1:6a-1:8h) occur in the present moment in the text. Several *yiqtol*-forms (1:6a, 1:8a, 1:8c, 1:8f, 1:8g) and participles (1:6i, 1:7a) would indicate this. An imperative form (1:8e) also indicates that the speeches are set in the present time of the text. The only *qatal*-forms present are either part of the making of the speeches of the Lord (1:6g, 1:8h) or are part of embedded speeches (1:6k, 1:7c).

Similar to the first unit, the speeches in the second unit (1:9a-1:14g) are also set in the present time of the text. To start with, the unit is headed by the deictic particle ועתה. Moreover, several *yiqtol* forms (1:9b, 1:9d, 1:10b, 1:10c, 1:10f, 1:13g), participles (1:11b, 1:12a), and one imperative form (1:9a) anchor the speeches in the present. Of special note is the speech by Malachi in 1:14a-g. There are formally six participles here, four of which are functioning verbally (1:14a, 1:14c, 1:14d, 1:14g). Furthermore, the only qatal *forms* in the unit are found in discourse markers (1:9e, 1:10e, 1:11e, 1:13d, 1:13h, 1:14f).[23]

Despite an abundance of *qatal* verbal forms, the speeches in the third unit (2:1a-9c) are also anchored in the present moment in the text. As the previous unit, this one also starts with the deictic particle ועתה. Additionally, *yiqtol* forms (2:2a, 2:2b) and participles (2:2h, 2:3a, 2:9a, 2:9b, 2:9c) anchor the speeches to the present time in the text. The speech by Malachi is also anchored in the present, as shown by the two

23. There is a *qatal* form in 1:9c but it is not the main verb in the sentence.

yiqtol forms present in the speech (2:7a, 2:7b). The *qatal* forms in the text serve to mark speeches (2:2d, 2:4d, 2:8d), as apodosis of a conditional construction (2:2g), to give additional information in a sentence (2:4b), and to describe past events in relation to Levi (2:5a, 2:5d, 2:6a, 2:6b, 2:6c, 2:6d),[24] the priests (2:8a, 2:8b, 2:8c), and the Lord (2:9a). Notwithstanding their abundance, these *qatal* forms do not establish the time of speaking in the text. Thus, the complete block is set in the present time in the text. This use of time by the TIA facilitates the involvement of the TIR as he witnesses firsthand the communication between the Lord and the priests.

Malachi 2:10a-2:16f

This block is formed by three units: 2:10a-d, 2:11a-12c, and 2:13a-16f. As with the previous block, we will first establish the overall speaker and addressee in the block before analyzing each unit individually.

In 2:10a-d there is an unmarked speech by an unidentified first plural who addresses itself. This first plural comes across in all the clauses, "all of us" in 2:10a, "created us" in 2:10b, "we act treacherously" in 2:10c, and "our fathers" in 2:10d. In the previous block we had already seen another unmarked and unidentified first plural. We tentatively concluded there that this represented Malachi and a we-group, possibly Jacob/Israel. Let us now explore whether that identification applies here.

Besides Jacob/Israel, there have been two other first plural entities in the text: Edom (1:4b) and the priests (1:6h, 1:6k). It seems out of the question to identify the first plural here with Malachi and Edom. This passage refers to a covenant, in which Edom plays no part. Moreover, as was pointed out in the previous block, Edom had already been discarded in the text by the Lord. The only other possibility left in the text for the first plural, besides Judah/Israel, would be Malachi and the priests.

In favor of identifying the priests as the speakers here is the fact that the first plural claims to have one father (אב) and creator and complains about the polluting (חלל) of a covenant. Previously, the word father has only appeared in 1:6a and 1:6c, in relation to the priests. The word pollute has been used only in 1:12a, also in connection to the priests. Is the TIR to identify the first plural with the priests?

There are several reasons, nonetheless, for the TIR not to identify the first plural here as the priests. For one, anyone in Israel could claim to have the Lord as a father, not only the priests.[25] Also, the polluting (חלל) here involves the covenant of the fathers,

24. Note also that these occur in a narrative-like passage because of the *wayyiqtol* forms in 2:5b and 2:5c.
25. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 83.

a covenant not mentioned previously in the text. Furthermore, none of the offenses previously levelled against the priests are present in 2:10a-d. On the contrary, there is an accusation of treachery (בגד), a charge not previously levelled against priests.

Other clues in the text also suggest that the priests are not to be identified as the companions of Malachi in the first plural. In 2:10a, the first plural asks rhetorically, do not we all (כל) have one father? The immediately preceding use of כל points to the people (העם) in opposition to the priests (2:9a). In a similar note, the first plural asks why they each acted treacherously towards their brothers (אח). The only previous use of this term is in 1:2e, where Jacob is contrasted to Esau. As was demonstrated in the syntactical analysis, the terms Jacob and Esau are being used collectively to describe their people, Judeans and Edomites. Thus, we seem to have here another allusion to Judeans. Lastly, all previous uses of the term covenant (ברית) were in the context of the Levitical covenant (2:4c, 2:5a, 2:8c). Nonetheless, that covenant was given for ruined (שׁחת) by the priests in 2:8c. Here another covenant is in view, the covenant of the fathers.[26]

Considering the arguments so far presented, it seems best to conclude that the first plural in the text represents the prophet Malachi and a we-group, still tentatively identified as Judeans/Israelites.[27]

The unit 2:11a-12c contains an unmarked direct speech. Unlike the unmarked speech in 2:10a-d, there is no designated speaker or addressee here. Thus, this unit constitutes an aside where the TIA addresses the TIR. Here, a new character, Judah (2:11a), is introduced. Judah, who appears in the third person, represents neither the speaker nor the addressee. The speech is not from Judah or to Judah, but about Judah.

Here, the TIA describes Judah as female, acting treacherously (בגד) in 2:11a, and as male, polluting (חלל) in 2:11c. These actions had been previously ascribed to the first plural: acting treacherously (בגד) in 2:10c, and polluting (חלל) in 2:10d. Moreover, the parallelism in 2:11a-b equates Judah with Israel and Jerusalem. Thus, the TIA confirms to the TIR that the we-group of 2:10a-d does refer to Judah/Israel. The aside ends with a curse statement by the TIA on those who "make her" (2:12b), the abomination mentioned in 2:11b, and yet offer a gift to the Lord.

26. This is the first use of אבת, plural of אב, thus introducing a new character in the text.
27. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 83. Assis considers 2:10 is spoken by men who considered themselves sons of one Father and so see all humanity as one family. Therefore, nullifying any prohibition of marriage with others. See, Assis, "Love, Hate and Self-Identity in Malachi."

The unit 2:13a-16f also presents an unmarked speech. The speaker is not identified, but the addressee is clearly a second plural (2:13a, 2:13d, 2:14a, 2:14c-e, 2:15e, 2:16e-f). Who is this second plural entity? The second plural is introduced in 2:13a, the first clause in this unit. This clause starts with a conjunction and mentions a "second thing" the second plural does. This means that this unit is dependent upon the previous one syntactically, through the conjunction, and semantically, through a second thing which implies that a first thing must have been previously mentioned.

The connection between the units helps to elucidate the identity of the second plural. The second plural is accused in 2:14d of acting treacherously (בגד) against their wives (2:14c). Previously Judah has been accused in 2:11a of acting treacherously (בגד), since they have married foreign wives (2:11e). Moreover, in 2:13a, the second plural is presented as doing (עשׂה) a second thing. What was the first thing they "did"?

There are only two previous uses of the root עשׂה in Malachi and they both appear in the previous unit. In 2:12b the one who "makes her" (עשׂה) is cursed. Neither the action done nor the one who does it are identified there, but this happens with the first use of the root. In 2:11b the action "done" (עשׂה) is abomination (תועבה) and the ones doing it are identified as Israel and Jerusalem.

The question in 2:14b also connects the second plural of 2:13a-16f with Judah/Israel/Jerusalem in 2:11a-12c. As was discussed in the syntactical analysis, the answer given to the second plural in 2:14c-15d refers, not just to the second thing they do, hypocritically covering the altar with tears (2:13b-d), but also the first thing they do, acting treacherously towards their wives 2:11a-e. The answer implies that those who ask "why?" are the same who commit abomination.[28]

The syntactic and lexical connections between units 2:13a-16f and 2:11a-12c show that the second plural of 2:13a-16f is to be identified with Judah, representing all Israel, in 2:11a-12c. This broad understanding of Judah is strengthened by the reference to the "tents of Jacob" (2:12b). This would in turn imply that the first plural addressing itself in 2:10a-d and the second plural addressed in 2:13a-16f are the same entity, Judah/Israel. This identification is possible because of the details apported in the aside in which the TIA addresses the TIR in 2:11a-12c. Without this aside, the TIR would not be able to clearly identify the entities in this unit.

28. Some may want to identify the second plural here as the second plural in the previous block, the priests. Several reasons were mentioned against seeing the first plural as the priests in the analysis of 2:1a-d. Here we can note that in 2:3a the Lord had threatened the seed of the priests, but here he is concerned for the welfare of the seed of the second plural (2:15d). The priests and the second plural do not appear to be the same entity in the eyes of the character Lord.

As for the speaker in 2:13a-16f, we can see that since the speech is unmarked, the speaker acts in the capacity of the prophetic voice in the text. He introduces the speech of the second plural (2:14a) and of the Lord (2:16d). This speaker must either be Malachi together with the we-group, as in 2:10a-b, or Malachi alone, as in 2:11a-12c.

The speaker of the block 2:10a-2:16f, despite squarely identifying itself with the first plural in 2:10a-d, later takes an antagonistic approach towards Judah/Israel. In 2:11a-b, Judah is identified as the one who has acted treacherously (בגד); in 2:14d, it is the second plural who acts treacherously (בגד). This is different from the "we" who present themselves as acting treacherously in 2:10c. Thus, there is a tension in the speaker of this block. There is simultaneously identification and affinity on the one hand and difference and distance on the other hand towards Judah/Israel. This could only be explained if Malachi, the prophetic voice in the text, allies himself either literally or figuratively with at least some part of the collective he is addressing, in this case the character Judah/Israel. This would create the rhetorical effect of making his message more palatable and acceptable. Thus, he can appeal to them more effectively, but he is also able to mark distance from them when condemning their faults.

Having established the speaker and addressee in 2:10a-2:16f, we will now analyze each unit in the block. In unit 2:10a-d there is a first plural addressing itself. The first plural has been identified as Malachi and possible a portion of Judah/Israel. They claim to have one God and father. They also complain about their being unfaithful to one another and polluting the covenant of their fathers.

The TIR is impacted by the revelation in this block that the first plural speaker represents Malachi and, at least rhetorically, part of the people of Israel. The TIR is also impacted by the sudden acknowledgment of wrongdoing in the part of Israel. So far, they had been defiant. Have they experienced a change of heart? The TIR is expected to side with the first plural and recognize his wrongdoings. No solution is offered, however. What course of action will be set before the TIR?

The identification of the first plural as Judah/Israel does not add any relevant information about Malachi. Since the association with Judah/Israel is mostly rhetorical, it does not impact on his identity. But the revealing of the identity of the first plural does serve to solve the uncertainty in the previous unit. The first plural can be seen there as either Malachi and Israel or Malachi and the priests, the addressees. Even if we consider the we-group in the previous block as Malachi and

the priests, this does not mean that he is to be considered as a priest. Since these associations are mostly for rhetorical reasons, Malachi remains an elusive figure in the text.

In 2:11a-12c the TIA addresses the TIR. Despite the initial siding with Judah/Israel, the prophetic voice in the text now marks distance and a distinction in the first plural begins to emerge. Initially they all confess that they have committed treachery (2:10c) and pollution (2:10d). But now the prophetic voice accuses Judah, which stands for Israel and Jerusalem (2:11b), of being treacherous (2:11a) and having polluted (2:11c). These actions are summed up in the accusation of having married foreign women (2:11e). The TIR sees that the previous apparent acknowledgement by the first plural was really an attempt by Malachi to soften and appeal to Israel. Will his appeal work?

The unit continues with a call, by Malachi and what remains of the first plural, for the divine destruction of all in Israel who "do" it (2:12b). The "it" refers to the abomination of 2:11b, which parallels the treachery of 2:11a. Both offenses are summed up in the marrying of pagan women (2:11e). The TIR witnesses this second curse called by the first plural. Similar to the curse in 1:14a, this curse is also called on non-priests who present sacrifices (2:12c). Since the speaker and addressee seem to be the same in both curse statements, this second curse can be seen as expanding or explaining the first statement. This time the reason for the curse is justified in the text: the offeror has committed abomination and treachery by marrying a pagan woman. This the TIR recognizes as against the covenant that the one God and father made with the forefathers of the present Israelites.[29] The reason for cursing remains a cultic one, but the focus has shifted from the kind of offering given to the respect of the offeror to broader covenant laws.

The last unit (2:13a-16f) in this block does not specify who the speaker is, but it does provide the key for the identification of the first plural when a second plural is introduced as the addressee. Since no change is introduced in the text about the speaker, we assume the same first plural remains as a speaker in this block. Here the second plural is accused of a second thing they do (2:13a). This implies that the doing of abomination by Israel and Jerusalem was the first thing they did (2:11b). Their second offense is that they are taken aback by the divine rejection of the gifts they bring, while in open defiance of the divine will (2:13b-d).[30]

29. See for example, Deuteronomy 7:1-4.
30. The phrase "from your hands" (מידכם) has been used already three times to communicate the displeasure of the Lord about their offerings (1:9c, 1:10f, 1:13g). Here in 2:13d that sentiment has not changed.

In the face of a second scolding, Judah/Israel does not counter the claim as before, but limits himself to ask for the reason of the divine displeasure (2:14b). Since the reason had already been given (2:12b), the first plural elaborates on the accusation as presented before. The treachery of Judah/Israel does not relate only to a cultic restriction pertaining to marriage. The offense relates to the abandoning of the Judean/Israelite wives (2:14c-d) and possibly even to the neglect of their children (2:15d).

The TIR is made to see an ever-widening horizon of the reasons for the issuing of curses and the call for divine judgement upon transgressors. Initially the offense is presented as strictly cultic, the offering of improper sacrifices (1:14d). Then, the offense is presented as cultic and social, the taking of foreign pagan wives (2:11e). Finally, the offense is presented as a social evil, the abandoning of wives and children (2:14c-d, 2:15d). The TIR does not see these reasons as mutually exclusive or opposing. They are all presented as valid reasons for divine displeasure and condemnation.

Some interpret the passage as presenting a male Judah being treacherous to a female YHWH.[31] This is not what the TIR is given in the text. For starters, the first time Judah is mentioned in the passage, it is presented as a female entity, not a male one. Furthermore, the TIR can see that Judah's actions in the pericope affect others directly, but not the Lord. He offends brothers (2:10c), fathers (2:10d), and the wife of his youth (2:14c). Judah does affect the Lord indirectly, by offending his holiness (2:11c). But this is done by marrying, not a foreign female god, but the "daughter" of a foreign god. In fact, Judeans are presented to the TIR as actively presenting gifts on the altar of the Lord (2:12c) and weeping, seeking the acceptance of their gifts (2:13b). In their own opinion, Judeans are still faithful to their Lord. Interestingly, it is perhaps the identity of Judah as a feminine entity which helps explain the Lord's position against divorce. He hates to divorce Judah. That may be why the Lord is presented as hating Edom. This possible connection is only opened to the TIR since the TIA chose to represent Judah as feminine. Again, the idea of a husband Judah who has abandoned his wife the Lord is simply not in the text for the TIR.

The unit finishes with a marked speech by the Lord. The parallel introduction and conclusion indicate the speech is addressed towards a second plural (2:15e, 2:16e-f). In this parallel introduction and conclusion, the Lord twice requests Judah/Israel to keep their spirit (רוח) and not to be treacherous (בגד). They are also called not to do violence (חמס). Finally, in an embedded speech, the second plural is told that the Lord hates divorce.

31. O'Brien, "Judah as Wife and Husband," 249.

The TIR notices again the call to avoid treachery. He also sees that the command to keep the spirit (רוח) is also related to marriage since the only other reference to רוח is where the character Judah/Israel is told that God has not made one (אחד) the illicit union and there is not even a remnant of spirit to it (2:15a-b). Thus, both requests pertain to the relationship between Judean men and their Judean wives. The reference to violence is not completely clear to the TIR since it cannot be tracked semantically in the rest of the book. One thing is certain, the reference is in relation to marriage, and is negative in nature. He is made to see the hypocrisy of Judah/Israel, who cover (כסה) the altar of the Lord with tears because their sacrifices are not accepted (2:13b), while at the same time they cover (כסה) their garments with violence towards their wives (2:16c).

The TIR is also made to hear the declaration that the Lord hates divorce. However, this declaration does not come directly from the Lord. It is reported to Judah/Israel, and therefore to him as well, by the prophetic voice in the text. The prophetic voice lets Judah/Israel and the TIR know something about the Lord, that the Lord himself has not directly revealed.[32]

This serves to encourage the TIR to trust the Lord more, which he already did based on the Lord's arguments, and now based on the testimony about the Lord by the prophetic voice.

The absence of any replies or refutations communicate to the TIR that Judah/Israel has been silenced, not just by the character Lord, but by the prophetic voice in the text as well. This encourages him to continue to side with the Lord and with the voice that carries his message.

In this block the location of the Lord is not specified. The location of Judah/Israel is obviously in their territory, the "tents of Jacob" (2:12b). Their location seems to be narrowed down to the courtyard of the Temple, as they are presented as covering the altar with tears (2:13b). There is also a possible reference to the Temple in 2:11c, where the holiness of the Lord is mentioned. The location of Judah/Israel also determines the location of the rest of the first plural and Malachi. They are all in the courtyard of the Temple of the Lord. Their common location creates the possibility for candid and intimate communication.

32. Niccacci notes that the formula in 2:16b indicates that God is the speaker but that there are no syntactic signs to mark the change in the speaker from the first plural to the Lord. My position is that there are no syntactic signs of a change in speaker because there is no change in speaker. The prophetic voice is speaking the words of the Lord. See, Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 105.

A verbless clause, a *yiqtol* form, and an infinitive construct set the communication that happens between different parts of the first plural in the now moment in the text (2:10a-d). The *qatal* form in 2:10b serves to provide background information, but does not detract from the present orientation of the text.

Inside the unit 2:11a-12c there are several *qatal* forms that serve to give background information (2:11a-e). Nonetheless, the main communicative thrust of the unit is in 2:12a-c. Here *yiqtol* forms and a participle set the communication in the present time in the text.

The last unit in this block (2:13a-16f) maintains the present orientation. The unit starts with a *yiqtol* form (2:13a). Even the embedded speeches of the Lord are depicted in the now moment in the text. The *w^e^qatal* plus *yiqtol* forms even give an impression of a future perspective, but are in reality expressing a strong wish from the Lord, especially considering the negations attached to the *yiqtol* forms (2:15f, 2:16f).

The present orientation in the text enables the TIR to have free access to the communication. By the end of this block, he stands close to the Lord and Malachi, as they have proven their case that the Lord has loved Israel, but Israel has not loved the Lord.

Malachi 2:17a-h

This brief block features an unidentified speaker addressing an unidentified second plural (2:17a). The unidentified speaker is able to introduce the speech of the second plural. Thus, this speaker is to be identified with the prophetic voice in the text, perhaps even together with the first plural as in the previous block.

If the unidentified speaker is the same as in the previous block, it would follow that the second plural here would also be the same as in the previous block. In support of this is the fact that both second plurals are introduced with a simple ואמרתם (2:14a, 2:17b) and their replies are questions, expressed in a very succinct way, only two words long (2:14b, 2:17c). Thus, in this block, as in the previous one, the speaker seems to be Malachi and some portion of Judah/Israel addressing some other portion of Judah/Israel.

The accusation leveled against the second plural is that of wearing the Lord with their words. They are accused of voicing opposition to the justice and fairness of the Lord.

They believe the Lord is pleased (חפץ) with evildoers (2:17g), so they do not accept as truthful the declarations of the Lord, that he is not delighted in them (1:10d).[33]

This declaration from the second plural is initially similar to previous declarations where they ask a question to counter the accusation just issued.[34] But what follows is different from previous declarations from the second plural. Here the second plural is not defending himself by not accepting any wrongdoing. They are rather accusing others of doing evil and they turn on the Lord for what they see as divine condoning of evil.

There is no indication as to the location of speaker or addressee. Given the continuity from the previous block, this aspect would appear to stay the same as well. The present orientation in the text is also maintained. This is indicated by the infinitive construct in 2:17d and the nonverbal clause in 2:17h. This communicative setting is conducive for communication between the characters and gives ample access to the TIR.

The TIR sees that the part of the first plural that Malachi addresses is the part that previously sided with him and the Lord. They are not satisfied with the lack of direct divine condemnation in the previous block. Malachi called for a divine curse of the offenders, but the Lord limited himself to being a witness on behalf of forsaken wives (2:14c) and calling the offending husbands to faithfulness (2:15e-f, 2:16e-f). Their complaint is not that the Lord has condemned the innocent, as the second plural attempts to do in 2:13b-d. Their complaint is that the Lord has not sufficiently condemned the guilty.

So far, the TIR has completely sided with Malachi and those from Judah/Israel, who supported him. But now Malachi seems to stand alone. It is then reasonable to conclude that he alone is the speaker in this block and addresses those who had previously supported him. Will the TIR continue to side with Malachi and the Lord, or will he side with those who feel righteous but condemn the Lord?

Malachi 3:1a-b

This two-clauses-long text unit features an unmarked speech by an unidentified first singular speaker (3:1a) addressing an unknown entity. The contents of the speech imply that the speaker is the Lord. The flow of the communication would also make

33. The root חפץ in 1:10d is parallel to רצה in 1:10f. רצה is also used in 1:13g to indicate the displeasure of the Lord.
34. See for example, 1:2d, 1:6k, 1:7b, 1:13a, 1:14b.

fitting for the Lord to be the speaker here; in the previous block he was put into question (2:17e-h), and so now he responds.

The Lord announces the imminent coming of מלאכי, "my messenger." This messenger is not to be identified as the מלאכי, "Malachi" of 1:1b. The prophetic voice in the text (1:1b) has already been sent and has been active in the text so far. But the מלאכי of 3:1a is not to be seen as an undefined messenger either. This messenger clearly belongs to the first singular. This is the Lord's messenger, "his messenger", who will prepare the way before him. Previous uses of the term מלאך cause the TIR to see him as a human figure. Syntactic and semantic parallels will eventually identify this prophetic figure as Elijah in 3:23a. For the moment, however, the TIR is left to wonder: Who is this messenger? Why is the Lord sending a messenger? What will he do to prepare the way for the Lord? Why is a preparation needed? Furthermore, where is the Lord going? And why is he going there? These questions will be answered for the TIR as the communication unfolds.

The addressee is also not identified in the text. Since it appears that the Lord is somehow reacting to the accusation of the second plural in the previous block, it could be assumed that they are the addressees here.[35] But this cannot be established from the text in this brief block. Since there is no particular addressee specified, the TIR is involved in a particular way.

The TIA chooses to use the character Lord in such a way that would cause the TIR to be both surprised by and deeply involved in the communication. The TIR expects to see in this unmarked speech the prophetic voice in the text, but he finds instead the character Lord. For the first time in the text, he hears the voice of the Lord without any introduction. The Lord is not taking the place of the prophetic voice since he is not introducing any characters. Nonetheless, the TIA had not used any character other than Malachi to address other characters without introduction, until now. The absence of an addressee also impacts directly the TIR. Since the Lord formally addresses no one, the TIR is given the impression that he is being addressed. This must be a very important message since it is being delivered directly by the Lord.

The location of the Lord is not specified in the text. The last known location of the Lord was Jerusalem (2:11b), more precisely the courtyard of the Temple (2:13b). It is not evident in the text whether this location has changed. If the addressee is indeed the second plural of the previous block, and if this is identical to the second plural of

35. Pettersen is of the opinion that from 2:10 onwards the addressee is the people as a whole, Judah, the inhabitants of the tents of Jacob. See, Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 310.

the block before it, the addressee would also be located in the courtyard of the Temple. Thus, possibly both the Lord and the second plural meet in the courtyard of the house of the Lord.

The content of the speech of the Lord is situated in the near future. This is seen by the use of the deictic particle הנה plus a participle (3:1a) and a *w^eqatal* form (3:1b). As has been mentioned before, the construction הנה plus participle points to an action that is just about to happen. A quick succession of events is thus presented, in which the Lord's messenger is just about to come and then immediately proceeds to prepare the way of the Lord. Both the possible location of the speaker and addressee and the timing of the speech make it possible for the TIR to have direct access to the communication.

The TIR is made to see that the apparently abrupt statement in 3:1ab is a direct response from the Lord to the assertions of the second plural in 2:17e-h. This causes the TIR to wait expectantly to see what will happen when the messenger of the Lord comes.

Malachi 3:1c-4a

This block is formed by two parallel units, namely 3:1c-h, and 3:2a-4a as indicated by the conjunction heading both. In 3:1c-h there is an unmarked speech by an unknown speaker addressing a second plural (3:1d, 3:1f). Since this is an unmarked speech, the TIR expects to see the prophetic voice in the text as the speaker. This is what he had expected in the previous unit, but was surprised to find the Lord as the speaker. Is the Lord the speaker of this unit as well?

Clauses 3:1c-h are not explicit whether the Lord is the speaker or not. There is a marked (3:1h) embedded speech by the Lord in 3:1g. So, the Lord is, obviously, not the speaker of the marker. But is he the speaker of clauses 3:1c-f? The text does not make it explicit. One thing is certain, the lord and messenger of the covenant is not the speaker as he is spoken about.

The identity of the second plural is not explicit in the text either. Since no new characters have been introduced, the TIR would be led to assume that this second plural is the same second plural as in 2:17a-h. That is, the "righteous" part of Judah/ Israel that had previously sided with Malachi against the "unrighteous" part of Judah, but also the part that questions the justice of the Lord in dealing with the "unrighteous" part.

In the second unit of this block, 3:2a-4a, we find an unmarked speech by an unknown speaker. Here it is clear that the speaker is not the lord and messenger of the covenant, as it is his coming and work that are discussed throughout the unit. In a similar fashion, the Lord is not the speaker as he is spoken about in 3:3e and 3:4a.

There is no specified addressee in this unit. In the absence of evidence to the contrary the TIR is made to assume that there is no change from the previous unit, and so the addressee here is still the second plural. Nonetheless, the formal absence of an addressee makes the TIR perceive that he is being addressed in the communication. Thus, we have a second plural, the "righteous" but disenchanted portion of Judah/ Israel as the addressee in this block. The question of the speaker remains open, but the relationship between the units helps to elucidate the issue.

Units 3:1c-h and 3:2a-4a are at the same syntactical level as revealed by the conjunction heading both. The double use of the conjunction serves to indicate that both units are syntactically dependent on the previous units and thus represent a response to the announcement in 3:1a-b. Usually the conjunction would be taken to also indicate that the speaker of the dependent units is the same as the speaker of the main unit. But this does not follow if there is some evidence to the contrary. In this case, one of the two parallel dependent units (3:2a-4a) is clearly spoken by a speaker different from the speaker of the main unit (3:1a-b). Semantically, both units refer to the same entity, the lord and messenger of the covenant. The lord and messenger of the covenant cannot be the speaker of 3:1c-h, while the lord and messenger of the covenant, as well as the Lord, cannot be the speaker of 3:2a-4a. These syntactic and semantic clues indicate to the TIR that the unidentified speaker of 3:1c-4a is the prophetic voice in the text, Malachi. He can then see that the speakers of 3:1a-b and 3:1c-h are different. After determining the speaker and addressee of 3:1c-4a we can move to analyze the way the TIA manipulates the characters and, ultimately, the TIR.

In 3:1c-h Malachi announces to Judah/Israel the imminent coming of the lord (האדון), who syntactically is the same entity as the messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית). Unlike previous messengers in the text who are semantically marked as human (1:1b, 3:1a), this messenger is clearly non-human, but God-related, as he is presented as the owner of the Temple (3:1c). Thus, there is a human/non-human tension in this character.

The TIR is made to shift his focus from the coming of the messenger of the Lord (3:1a), who prepares the way for the Lord (3:1b), to the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant (3:1e). The TIA glosses over the comings of messenger of

the Lord and the Lord (3:1a-b) and chooses to direct the attention of the TIR to this non-fully-human figure who is longed for (3:1d) and desired (3:1f) by the second plural. Who is this God-related messenger?

In clause 3:1g, the TIA gives a hint. The TIR could see this embedded speech as the words of the Lord, as marked by 3:1h. This would cause him to perceive that the Lord is saying that a third person, the lord and messenger of the covenant, is coming. In this case the TIR is made to see that the Lord is introducing the coming of another divine or at least God-related figure. But this does not seem reasonable. After the Lord announces the coming of his messenger who prepares the way for his own coming (3:1a-b), the TIR expects to see one of these two figures, not a third one. The TIR could also be made to perceive that the Lord is announcing his own coming. However, the Lord has never identified himself in the text as אדון, that is a label only others have used for him. Furthermore, the TIA has not presented any character addressing itself in the third person in the text before. How is the TIR to understand the declaration in 3:1g? There is a precedent where the prophetic voice quotes indirectly the words of the Lord. This seems to be the situation here.

Previously, in 2:16a, the TIA presents an embedded speech and marks it as being spoken by the Lord (2:16b). Nonetheless, in 2:16ab the TIR is made to see that the embedded speech was not spoken by the Lord, rather the prophetic voice in the text reported what he heard the Lord say. The TIR was able to hear the voice of God only through the mediation of the prophetic voice in the text. This seems to be the same communicational setting as in 3:1gh. The character Lord is quite capable of saying "I am coming", as in 3:1a. But it is the prophetic voice who reports, the Lord said that he is coming.

This precedent cues the TIR to perceive that Malachi, the prophetic voice in the text, is the speaker of the embedded speech and is reporting what the Lord has said. The Lord said that he himself would come. The TIR is not able to hear this directly from the Lord but hears it only through Malachi. In this way the TIR is made to perceive that the promise of the coming of the Lord is sure. It was announced by the Lord himself (3:1b) and it was confirmed by what the prophet has heard from the Lord (3:1g). The Lord said he would come, and Malachi heard and reported what the Lord said.

The question remains though, how does this affect the TIR? He was first told in 3:1ab about a messenger and about the Lord who were coming. Then he was told in 3:1c-f that the lord and messenger of the covenant was coming. Then again, he was told that

the Lord had said that he was coming (3:1gh). So, in 3:1a-g the TIA has presented the TIR with one human character, the messenger of 3:1a, and two divine or God-related characters, the Lord (יהוה), and the lord (אדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית). We have already noted that the TIR is eventually made to perceive that the messenger of 3:1a is the Elijah of 3:23a. But how is he to perceive the divine or God-related figures? Are the Lord (יהוה) and the lord (האדון) and messenger of the covenant (מלאך הברית) the same entity?

After the Lord announces his coming, Malachi announces the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant, signaling in this way that this is what was meant by the Lord. This declaration of the prophetic voice in 3:1g is key for the TIR. Malachi's declaration creates an inclusio affirming the coming of the Lord. The Lord announces his coming (3:1b) and Malachi confirms it (3:1g). The TIR is thus made to expect the coming of the Lord, but he is presented with the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant. Thus, contextually, he is made to perceive that the Lord of Hosts (יהוה צבאות), who Malachi announces (3:1h) as coming, is the lord and messenger of the covenant of 3:1c-f. Communicationally, he is made to perceive that the one coming is the speaker of 3:1a-b, the Lord.

This makes clear to the TIR that the lord and messenger of the covenant is to be identified as the Lord. It seems, nonetheless, that the TIA is intentionally causing the TIR to simultaneously equate the Lord to the lord and messenger of the covenant, and, at the same time, to make a distinction between them.

The TIA has the character Lord announcing his own coming, then he as the prophetic voice announces the coming of the Lord, using the titles lord and messenger of the covenant, lastly the TIA as the prophetic voice repeats the Lord's announcement of his coming. If all the TIA wants is to refer to the Lord, why are the titles different? The TIA has been using the term יהוה from the beginning of the book. Why would he employ the previously unused definite term האדון as well as מלאך הברית to signify יהוה?[36] New terms hint to the existence of new characters as different labels must point to different entities, or at least to different aspects of the same entity. The TIA decides to use different labels and it is the job of the TIR to decipher them. But in this case, it seems that the TIA is intentionally giving ambiguous signals to the TIR.

36. The term אדון has been used before. In 1:6e the Lord (יהוה) compares himself to a lord (אדון). In 1:12c the Lord complains about the defiling of the table of the lord (אדון). Lastly, in 1:14d a curse is called on someone offering an improper sacrifice for the lord (אדון). In all these occasions the TIR sees that the lord (אדון) points to the Lord (יהוה). Nonetheless, the definite form of the term (האדון) is used only in 3:1c. The title מלאך הברית appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

Syntactically, the lord and the messenger of the covenant are one entity that is separate from the Lord. Semantically, the lord and the messenger of the covenant present a human/non-human tension but are nonetheless presented as an equivalent entity to the Lord. Furthermore, the work and the result of the work of the lord and messenger of the covenant is different to that of the Lord. Communicationally, the lord and the messenger of the covenant and the Lord seem to be presented as the same entity. Thus, we can see that the syntactic, semantic, and communicational clues given to the TIR do not align. This difficulty will be solved for the TIR of the Christian canon, but will remain clouded for the TIR of Malachi.[37]

The location of Malachi is not explicitly shown in 3:1c-h. As for the character Lord, he had been previously presented as in the courtyard of the Temple (2:13b). Now, the character lord and messenger of the covenant is presented as entering his Temple (3:1c). The second plural was also previously portrayed as at the Temple of the Lord (2:13b). Here, they are portrayed as longing (3:1d) and delighting (3:1f) in the lord, so their location would likely be at the courtyard of the Temple or even with the lord inside the Temple. The TIR had before been part of the first plural (2:10a) that was eventually shown to also include Malachi and Israel/Judah. So, this creates a condensation in the text where all characters are portrayed in the same location together with the TIR. He continues to witness the scene firsthand.

The use of a *yiqtol* form (3:1c) and two participles (3:1d, 3:1f) situate the speech of the prophetic voice in the now moment in the text. The embedded speech on 3:1g is set in the immediate future as evidenced by the use of הנה plus participle. The TIR is made to see that as the coming of the messenger of the Lord was imminent, the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant is also imminent. The TIA chose to bypass the person and work of the messenger of the Lord and rather focused the attention of the TIR on the lord and messenger of the covenant. The TIR awaits expectantly to see what will be revealed next about him.

In unit 3:2a-4a the TIR becomes aware that the speaker of 3:1c-h is Malachi. This supports the initial conviction that the character Lord does not talk about his own coming in the third person. It is Malachi who announces him, (mis)labeling him as

37. Many have pointed to an analogy between the messenger of the covenant and the messenger of the Lord as both characters seem to be divine-like. The messenger of the covenant in Malachi in equated to the Lord. The messenger of the Lord, among many things, claims having taken Israel out of Egypt (Judges 2:1), thus making himself equal to the Lord (Exodus 20:2). For an example of a discussion of these characters and the analogy between Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20, see, Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," 76–78.

lord and messenger of the covenant. In 3:2a-4a the focus is again on the lord and messenger of the covenant, in particular his work and the results of his work.

The location of Malachi is not specified in the text. The location of the Lord is also not specified in the text. Furthermore, the location of the lord and messenger of the covenant is not specified. He is described, however, as sitting (3:3a) in a location where he is able to purify the sons of Levi (3:3c). Thus, although unspecified, the location of the lord affects what happens at the altar at the Temple. Once the priests are purified, the offerings of the people also become acceptable. It would seem then that all the activities described in 3:2a-4a happen at the lord's Temple to which he comes (3:1c). The TIR continues to witness from the Temple all the activities of the lord and its results regarding the priests and eventually all the people.

The result of the purifying work of the lord and messenger of the covenant is that the Lord is presented with gifts that are appropriate (3:3ef) and the gifts of Judah and Jerusalem are accepted before the Lord (3:4a). In this way the TIA causes the TIR to notice again a subtle distinction between the lord (אדון) and the Lord (יהוה). It is the lord who purifies, but it is the Lord who receives proper offerings. The priests had previously spoiled the covenant between the Lord and Levi (2:8c). The people had also confessed to polluting the covenant between their fathers and the Lord (2:10a-d). The work of the lord and messenger of the covenant restores these broken relationships.

This restorative element of the lord on behalf of the Lord is also seen in the curse declarations. From the three curse declarations in the text so far, two were issued by the prophetic voice in the text (1:14a-d, 2:12a-c) and one by the Lord (2:2e-h). This last declaration was against the priests and was given with the intention, not to destroy them, but to bring them back to covenantal faithfulness (2:1a, 4b-c). The curse declarations show that the intent of the character Lord is saving and restoring the people, while the character Malachi seems more inclined, together with a portion of Judah/Israel, to see the destruction of transgressors. Here the TIA uses the character lord (אדון) to accomplish the desire of the character Lord (יהוה), by purifying the Levites and restoring proper relationship between him and the people.

Unit 3:2a-4a is set in the now and future moments in the text. Clauses 3:2a and 3:2b have participles followed by infinite constructs. These serve to anchor the speech in the present. Then follow a series of *w^{e}qatals*. These take the speech from the present and drive it into the future time, from the perspective of the text. The time orientation continues to give ample opportunity for the TIR to observe the communication

happening in the text. The future orientation serves to create expectation in the TIR for what is to come.

In the present block the TIR expected to find a description of the coming of the messenger of the Lord or of the Lord himself. The TIA nonetheless presented him with a description of the person and the work of the lord and messenger of the covenant. This lord is equal to the Lord for Malachi but not for the TIA. In this way the TIR is made to perceive this entity as somehow equal to the Lord of Hosts of 3:1h, but different from the Lord who announces his coming in 3:1b. The TIR is also made to see that the God-related figure, lord and messenger of the covenant, works to benefit the Lord and to accomplish his purpose. He restores proper relationships between the Lord and the people.

The full impact of the mixed clues the TIA gives the TIR is only to be realized in the Christian canon. Through the New Testament applications of this passage a very high Christology emerges.[38] The one who comes to his temple is equal to יהוה but distinct from יהוה.

Malachi 3:5a-d

This brief block is a marked direct speech by a first singular. The speech marker indicates that the TIA presents a first singular character as the speaker. This entity is identified as the Lord in 3:5d. His embedded speech is addressed to a second plural. This second plural is not identified in the text. Since no new characters have been introduced, we continue to assume this second plural is the same as in 2:17a-h, a part of Judah/Israel, who initially sided with Malachi and the Lord in 2:10a-16f, but then, denounced the justice of the Lord.

In his speech, the Lord announces to the second plural that he is coming for "the judgement" (למשׁפט).[39] This is exactly what the second plural had requested when they asked, where is the God of "the judgement" (המשׁפט) in 2:17h. The TIR is made to see an irony here, nonetheless. The second plural had said in 2:17e-f that those doing evil were considered as good by the Lord. But surely, they did not consider themselves as

38. The traditional Christian interpretation of the characters in Malachi is that John the Baptist is the Elijah who prepares the way for Jesus. Jesus is the divine lord who owns the Temple and the messenger of the covenant who restores the relationship between God and mankind. He is at the same time equal to YHWH but distinct from YHWH. For a decidedly trinitarian interpretation of the characters in Malachi, see, Bucey, "The Lord and His Messengers: Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1-4." Cf., Malone, "Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?," 228.
39. The definite article is embedded in the preposition.

those who were doing evil. Here the Lord accuses the second plural of the longest list of sins in the book (3:5b).[40]

The sins of the second plural are mostly ethical in nature and do not correlate to previous sins mentioned in the text. These are sins that were heretofore hidden from view in the text, and the Lord finally discloses them to show the hypocrisy of the second plural. Although of a different kind as obvious cultic sins, the ethical sins of the second plural are also noticed by the Lord and earn his condemnation. They want the Lord to punish the guilty, but not to punish them. Here the TIR is made to see that the second plural is also squarely among the guilty. They are among those who do not fear the Lord (3:5c).

Neither the location of the Lord nor of the second plural are mentioned in the text. We assume they remain where they were before, at the Temple. This continues to give the TIR access to the communication as he is also located there since 2:10a.

The time of the speech of the Lord is in the future time in the text. This is the same as the time of the actions of the lord and messenger of the covenant. Is the TIA signaling to the TIR that the Lord is the lord and messenger of the covenant? As before, yes and no.

On the one hand, the Lord had announced his coming, then Malachi announced the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant, implicitly labeling him as the Lord. Here again the Lord announces his coming. He does nothing to distinguish himself from the lord and messenger of the covenant. But on the other hand, the Lord describes his work in very different terms from the work of the lord and messenger of the covenant. The lord and messenger of the covenant comes to purify, but the Lord comes to judge. So, again we see the TIA giving mixed signals to the TIR about the identity of the lord and messenger of the covenant and his relationship to the Lord. He wants to pique the curiosity of the TIR and entice him to keep looking for more clues about the lord and messenger of the covenant. These may not come in the text of Malachi. In that case, the TIR would have to wait for a realization beyond the text.

40. This long list of sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers/liars, those who defraud laborers, those who oppress the widows and fatherless, and deprive the alien of justice, may be an allusion to the curses of Deuteronomy 27:15-26. In Deuteronomy, curses are called upon those who withhold justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow (27:19). Curses are also called upon idol worshipers [sorcerers?] (27:15), those who move boundaries and lead the blind astray [liars?] (27:17,18), and those who have illicit sex [adulterers?] (27:20-23). This possible allusion is relevant, since the TIA has already alluded in 2:2e to the curse as present in Deuteronomy 28:20.

This block concludes the Lord's reply to the second plural. They had claimed that he did not punish the guilty. The Lord replied by showing that they were guilty as well. But instead of destroying them, he chose to cleanse and restore them.

Malachi 3:6a-d

This block contains an unmarked direct speech by a first singular, who identifies himself as the Lord. Here, as in 3:1a-b, the TIA presents the character Lord unannounced. This, once again, causes surprise in the TIR, who expects to see Malachi behind an unmarked speech, but encounters the Lord instead. Furthermore, the TIA presents the character Lord in a very forceful way by using a personal pronoun and renominalizing the name of the Lord.

Unlike 3:1a-b, here the Lord has a clear addressee, a second plural. However, this second plural is not the same as in the previous blocks. The second plural is renominalized as the sons of Jacob (3:6c). As was mentioned before, although unique in Malachi, the phrase "sons of Jacob" is commonly used in the Hebrew Bible as a designation for Judah/Israel. So, here the TIR sees that the Lord is addressing all of Judah/Israel and not just a part of it. Since there is a designated addressee, the TIR is not made to consider himself as the addressee. Nonetheless, he is also involved in the communication. He had been part of the first plural in 2:10a, comprised also of Malachi and Judah/Israel. Here as well, he is made to see that his existence is also because of the Lord.

No new details are added as to the location of Malachi, Judah/Israel, the Lord, and the TIR. They all seem to remain at the Temple of the Lord. The TIR would then continue to witness firsthand the interchange between God and his people.

Despite the presence of two *qatal* verbal forms, this speech is set in the present time. This block is a conditional construction, and it means to coveys a generic truth. Since the Lord has not changed, Judah/Israel has not been destroyed. Nonetheless, the two *qatal* verbal forms do anchor this speech to the present in reference to the past, meaning, so far, the Lord has not changed. Therefore, so far, Judah/Israel has not been destroyed. The TIR is made to see this construction not as a declaration about the immutability of God, but rather as a declaration of a fact in the relationship between the Lord and his people. Until the present time in the text, the Lord has chosen to love and spare his disobedient children.

The parallelism makes evident for the TIR that it is the relation between the Lord and his children what has made possible their survival. The survival of Judah/Israel is not

dependent on what they have done or not done. Their survival rests on the Lord. Contrary to nature, the sons have not honored their father (1:6a), but in harmony with his nature, the Lord has loved and spared the disobedient sons. Will the Lord continue to overlook the offense indefinitely? The TIR is not yet told.

Malachi 3:7a-12c

This block is divided into five units (3:7a-g, 3:8a-9c, 3:10a-f, 3:11a-d, and 3:12a-c). As we have done previously, before analyzing each unit individually, we will first establish who the speaker and addressee are in this block and how this impacts the TIR.

In all units of this block, except one, the TIA introduces the speeches of the Lord (3:7e, 10d, 11d, 12c). In 3:8a-9c, where the speech of the Lord is not marked, the content makes it clear that the speaker continues to be the Lord.

All units of this block are addressed towards a second person plural. This entity is identified as the whole nation in 3:9c. This, no doubt, refers back to the sons of Jacob (3:6c) in the previous block. The second plural represents the people of God, who, according to biblical tradition were the children of Jacob.

In this block the TIR gets to see the unfolding of the declaration of the Lord, that it is only because of him that his people have not been destroyed (3:6). In the beginning of the block there is an apparent exchange between the Lord and his people. But as the block progresses the second plural simply stops responding.

The TIA presents the character Lord in 3:7a-g pleading with his people to return to him. The use of the imperative (3:7c) and the modal form (3:7d) signal to the TIR the depth of emotion and urgency in the Lord's call. These forms also serve to anchor the discourse in the present moment of the text and so give access to the TIR to observe firsthand the interaction between the Lord and the second plural.[41]

Since there is no new information about the location of the Lord or the people of Israel whom he addresses, we assume they continue to be at the Temple grounds as in previous blocks. This would communicate to the TIR that whatever return the Lord intends on the part of the second plural is not physical in nature. The call is to be

41. The two *qatal* forms in 3:7a and b serve to give background information. The discourse nonetheless is presented in the now moment of the text. The *yiqtol* form in the reply of the second plural (3:7g) further makes this evident.

understood in a symbolic way, a return of the heart, a spiritual retuning, and not an issue of physical location.

The reply of the second plural is dismissive of the claim of the Lord (3:7g). The command of the Lord to return implies that they have departed. But the questioning of the second plural implies their denial of having departed. There is an impasse here and the TIR finds himself in the middle of the confrontation. In previous blocks he was subtly coaxed to side with the prophetic voice and the Lord. Here no such technique can be observed. The TIA presents choices to both the character second plural and to the TIR. Will the second plural accept their departure and return to the Lord? Will the TIR side with Lord or with the second plural?

Given the negative of the second plural to acknowledge any wrongdoing, in 3:8a-9c the Lord presents another accusation, "you are robbing me." As before, the second plural refuses to accept the claim of the Lord. They not only refuse the accusation of stealing, but also seem to try to limit the action of stealing to the past, through the use of the *qatal* in 3:8d, and not to a present reality, as implied by the use of a participle by the Lord in 3:8b.

What follows is the most encompassing curse declaration in the text so far. Since according to the Lord, the second plural is indeed robbing him, he now proceeds to curse them. Their robbery is the evidence of his previous claim that they have departed from him. Thus, the Lord pronounces them continually cursed as they are continually robbing him.[42] This curse is labeled as "the curse", using the definite article, and is incumbent upon the whole nation.

This unit continues to be portrayed in the present time of the text.[43] The location, as well, continues to be the same as previously. This means that the TIR continues to have full access to the communication between the Lord and his people. In this unit the sense of intimacy of this communication is heightened for the TIR, since the speech of the Lord is unmarked (3:8a).

The TIA has nowhere explained what "the curse" refers to. Since we have considered the TIR to have access to the Hebrew Bible, it would be evident to him that the phrase is analogous to a Deuteronomic covenantal curse. But does the second plural

42. Note the use of the participles in 3:9a and 3:9b.
43. This is seen in the use of the modal *yiqtol* in 3:8a and the participles in 3:8b and 3:9ab. The *qatal* in 3:8d is being used to give background information.

understand what the Lord refers to? Careful observation of the way the TIA has used the character second plural reveals how "the curse" is intelligible to them.

The second plural has been described as sons of Jacob (3:6c). They are also described as aware of the covenant between God and their ancestors (2:10d). They are even designated "Jacob", who stands in opposition to "Esau" (1:2e). So, the character second plural is presented in the text as having a collective memory of events described in the Hebrew traditions. Furthermore, the TIA will eventually reveal that they know these traditions, not just as oral accounts, but as "Torah", a written record portrayed as having its origin in the events surrounding the giving of the Law at Mount Horeb (3:22a-c).

It is in this way that the reference to "the curse" is intelligible for the second plural. Since they have access to the Torah of Moses, they are aware of "the curse" which is presented in Deuteronomy 28:20. If access to the curse in Deuteronomy is not granted to the second plural, the reference to "the curse" by the Lord would be either ambiguous or meaningless for them. It is unclear in the text whether we should presume the second plural character to also be aware of "the curse", as present in the book of Proverbs 3:33.[44]

The crushing accusations and verdict of the Lord cause the TIR to side with the Lord. The TIR assumes that the condemnation of the second plural is final, since "the curse" as presented in Deuteronomy seems to imply total destruction.

In 3:10a-f the character Lord continues to address the second plural, his people. By the use of two imperatives (3:10a, 3:10c) the passage is anchored to the present moment in the text. The conditional construction in 3:10ef expresses a possible future but continues anchored to the now moment in the text.

The Lord seems to be placed in the Temple in this unit. He commands the second plural to bring the full tithe into the "house of treasure" (3:10a). By using parallelism, he further describes this place as "his house." If this is the Lord's residence it would be natural to locate him there in his speech. The Lord has been depicted as in the Temple since block 1:6a-2:9c. In block 2:10a-16f he was also indirectly described as in the Temple. The reiteration of his location is not to add new information to the TIR. By describing the Lord's location as "his house" the TIA causes the TIR to associate

44. The definite noun מארה is used only in Deuteronomy 28:20 and Malachi. In Proverbs 3:33 the noun is considered as definite because of the construct relationship to the proper noun יהוה. But it is not formally definite.

this place to "his Temple", to which the lord and messenger of the covenant enters (3:1c). The TIR is made to see again the intimate connection and the superimposing of the Lord and the lord.

The combining elements of time and location, the present orientation of the discourse, and the common location of characters, continue to give complete access to the TIR as a discursive witness to the communication between the Lord and his people.

The TIR is also confronted by the double use of imperatives. After learning of the Lord's cursing his people, now the TIR is made to wonder about the Lord's mercy. He is made to see that indeed the Lord wants his people to return to him (3:7c). Even after being cursed, he is opening a window of opportunity for them. The threat of destruction is not final. There is an opportunity for the second plural.

The TIR is further impacted by the very particular use of a conditional construction in 3:10e-3:11c. This construction can be seen as an oath formula,[45] but the similarity to 2:2a-f warrants considering a special use of a conditional construction. In both passages we have אם לא followed by a *yiqtol* form, functioning as protasis, and *w*^{e}*qatals*, functioning as the apodosis of a conditional statement.[46] Given the similar syntactical conduction it seems best to take both passages as formally indicating a condition.

The TIR is made to see, nonetheless, that the conditional construction in 3:10e-12c is used in such a way that the conditional element lies outside of the sphere of the Lord. The Lord will either open the heavens or he will pour blessings, actions which are in fact equivalent. The real condition is the response of the second plural to the Lord's command to test him. In this way, after the Lord commands the second plural to test him, he offers to either open the windows of heaven (3:10e) or to pour over an abundant ברכה, blessing (3:10f). Before, the Lord had threatened to curse the blessings of the priests (2:2f). Now he offers a complete reversal from being cursed to being blessed.

After the declaration of curse in the previous unit, the offer of a blessing from the Lord shocks the TIR. The TIR is expectant to see the reaction of the second plural to the command of the Lord. But the TIA further manipulates the TIR by presenting the character second plural as not giving any sort of reply. This unit ends and there is no response forthcoming form the second plural.

45. For the use of אם לא in oath formulas, see, Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, §50.1.B(2); Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §40.11.2.B.
46. See, Alviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, vol. 86, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 137. §107

Units 3:11a-d and 3:12a-c follow a similar pattern. In both units the TIA introduces the character Lord who continues to elaborate on how he will bless the second plural if they follow his command to test him. Both units are set in the future through the use of *w^e^qatals* in 3:11a and 3:12a. But this is a conditional or possible future that may come to pass, depending on the response of the second plural. This conditional or possible aspect is seen in the use of modal *yiqtols* in 3:11bc and 3:12b. In both units there is no change in the location of the Lord or his people. They continue at the Temple. These features continue to grant access to the TIR to witness the communication.

Despite the marked similarities, one element differentiates 3:11a-d from 3:12a-c. In the later unit, the TIA reintroduces a character that had been absent from the last several blocks in the text, the nations. In 1:11a, the nations are presented to the priests (1:10a-c) as worshipping the Lord. More importantly, in 1:14g the nations are presented as fearing the Lord, when his own people are being cursed. The nations also serve as some kind of witnesses on behalf of the Lord to justify his act of cursing. Since other nations worship God faithfully, his own people must certainly worship faithfully, and unfaithfulness is not to be tolerated. Now, in 3:12a, the nations are presented as happy about the blessing that God will give his people. They now become witnesses celebrating the Lord's act of blessing. The use of the nations by the TIA in the mouth of the character Lord, seems to be calculated to further motivate the second plural to accept the offer and obey the Lord.

In this block the TIR has witnessed the intensity of the emotions of the Lord as expressed through the use of imperatives (3:7c, 3:10a, 3:10c). He has witnessed the most encompassing curse uttered so far in the text (3:9a). He has also seen the Lord offer the second plural to turn their present curse to an overwhelming blessing (3:10f) that will result in a state of complete delight (3:12b), reversing the displeasure of the Lord (1:10d). By the end of the block the TIR continues to wait expectantly for the response of the second plural. He has been shocked by the gracious offer of the Lord. Now he is shocked by the lack of response from the second plural.

Malachi 3:13a-15d

This block is formed by two units: 3:13a-d and 3:14a-15d. In these units there is a marked speech by the Lord. The speech of the Lord contains the embedded reported speech of a second plural. The communicative result is that although, apparently, the second plural is speaking, it is in reality the Lord who is presenting the words they have spoken at some time previous to the now moment in the text. The TIA has the Lord presenting the words of the second plural and the TIR, who is expecting a reply

from them, is made to feel disappointed. The second plural does not directly respond to the offer of blessing from the Lord. The Lord has to report what they said, not to him, but about him. There is an apparent breakdown in communication between the Lord and the second plural.[47]

The speech of the Lord presents a complaint to the second plural (3:13a). These are apparently the only words by the Lord in this unit. But all that follows are also the words of the Lord. The reply from the second plural comes only as the Lord presents it. It is the Lord who introduces their replies (3:13c, 3:14a) and repeats their words (3:13d, 3:14b-15d).

The speech of the Lord happens in the present time of the text, but it is describing past events. In the same way, the supposed replies by the second plural are given in the present time of the text but describe past realities. The *qatal* forms employed (3:13a, 3:13d) allow for this present perspective.[48] This present aspect of the discourse is most clearly seen in the temporal particle ועתה and the participle מאשרים in 3:15a. Aside from temporal aspects, there is a shift from the discursive to the narrative world. As the second embedded speech of the second plural comes to a close, a *wayyiqtol* form is used (3:15d), and with that there is a brief change in the text from the discussion of ideas to the narration of events. The present orientation of the text continues to give access to the TIR to witness, first the discourse, and eventually the narration in the text. Since no new information is given regarding the location of the Lord or the second plural, I assume they continue at the Temple, and this also facilitates the direct interaction between characters and the involvement of the TIR.

In the replies by the second plural, the TIA makes clear to the TIR, first, that the character Lord is omniscient, and second, that the character second plural has not been affected by the calls and offers of the Lord in the previous block. In fact, the second plural here reiterates and enlarges the complaints of unit 2:17a-h.

The omniscience of the Lord is revealed in the way the second plural addresses him. In 3:13d they address the Lord directly, as a second person singular. But in 3:14b and onwards, they refer to the Lord in the third person. In other words, the speech of the second-person plural that the Lord reports or quotes back to them, was not addressed to him. The TIR already knew that the Lord was able to see the actions of other characters since he had been countering their arguments by pointing out their actions, but now the TIR is made aware that the Lord knows even the words characters speak

47. Assis, "Mutual Recriminations: God and Israel in the Book of Malachi."
48. See, Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 6–7; Van Wieringen, *The Reader-Oriented Unity*, 8.

in private among themselves. This form of address also evidences the emotional distance from the second plural that results in a lack of communication to the Lord.

The connection between the present unit and 2:17a-h is signaled to the TIR through the term דברים (words). The root is used only twice previously in the text. In 1:1b the prophetic voice introduces his message as the singular דבר of the Lord. The only other use of the term is in the plural form by the second plural in 2:17a. In 2:17a-h the second plural had complained that those doing evil were seen as good, that God delighted in them, and that there was no God of justice. The subsequent uses in 3:13a, by the Lord, in reference to what the second plural said, and in 3:13d, in denial by the second plural, moves the TIR to look back to the accusation and charges leveled by the second plural to the Lord in block 2:17a-h.

The TIR witnesses as the second plural contradicts several of the main arguments of the Lord in the text so far. They proclaim that is it useless to עבד (serve) the Lord (3:14b). The only previous use of עבד is in the words of the Lord where he declares that a servant is to honor his master/lord and that he as a master/lord expects honor (1:6a-f). The second plural does not deny that the Lord is a master nor that they are servants. They deny that he is a good master. They claim there is no reward in serving the Lord.

The second plural also declares having kept (שׁמר) the precepts of the Lord (3:14d) and having walked (הלך) before the Lord (3:14e). Previously, the TIR has witnessed only one character keeping something in regard to the Lord, the ideal priest of 2:7a. He has also seen only one character walk with the Lord, Levi in 2:6c. Contrary to the words of the second plural, the TIR has witnessed how the Lord has declared that both the priests (2:9b) and all the people of Israel (3:7b) have not שׁמר (kept) what the Lord required of them. It is against this background that the invitation to שׁמר their spirits is given (2:15e, 2:16e). This places two possibilities before the TIR: the second plural may be lying about having kept the Lord's charge and having walked with him; or they may be somehow connected to Levi and that ideal priest and be telling the truth. Which is it?

Lastly, and most pointedly, the second plural declares the insolent blessed (אשׁר) in 3:15a, the doer of wickedness (רשׁעה) built up (בנה) in 3:15b, and narrates their having tested (בחן) God and having escaped in 3:15cd. All these statements by the second plural are in contradiction to what the TIR has witnessed the Lord declare previously. The Lord had said that doers of wickedness (רשׁעה) may want to build (בנה), but he

would tear it down (1:4f-h). Furthermore, in 3:10c and 3:12a, the Lord had invited the second plural to test him (בחן) and thus be called blessed (אשר).

For a reason that the text does not make explicit, the second plural does not bless (ברך) the insolent, but they do declare them blessed (אשר). Perhaps the second plural refrains from blessing or is literally unable to bless, since the Lord has cursed their blessings (2:2f). It appears then, that at the moment in the text, only the character Lord has the power to bless (3:10f). In practice, what the second plural does is to mimic the reaction of the nations towards those who took the challenge of the Lord and tested him (3:12a). The nations were to call the obedient blessed (אשר). In this way, what the second plural is doing is to assume the declaration of blessing (ברך) from the Lord on the insolent (3:15a), and consequently they declare their state of blessing blessed (אשר). As the Lord had offered to reverse their state of being cursed and offered them to be blessed, they take the possible state of being blessed and declare it a reality in the life of the insolent.

This presents a great dilemma to the TIR, as he is virtually forced to accept the arguments of the second plural, since he is presented with facts, a narration. The wicked literally tested God and literally escaped (3:15d). Does that mean that the Lord lied about punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous? Has he blessed the insolent? Is he, after all, really pleased with the doers of evil (רע), as the second plural had alleged in 2:17f? On the other hand, the TIR knows that the second plural has lied about keeping and walking in the way of the Lord. Who is telling the truth?

In 3:15a, the TIA presents the TIR a clue for understanding the contradictory claims of the Lord and the second plural. In the same clause where the second plural declares the insolent blessed, they are introduced by using a macro syntactic sign (ועתה) and a first-plural personal pronoun (אנחנו). The only other place in the text where these elements collide is in unit 1:9a-d. There have been several uses of first common plurals in the text, and these usually refer to a second plural, the people of Israel. From the beginning of the text, the Lord has addressed a second plural (1:2a) who addresses itself as a first plural (1:2d). But in 1:9b the text reveals a distinction between the second plural and the first plural. In that text, a first plural calls the second plural to acts of repentance. The second plural there referred to the priests.[49] Given the syntactical parallels, the first plural in 3:15a should not be seen as representing Israel but should be seen as somehow connected to the second plural of 1:9a-d, the priests.

49. The particle ועתה is also used in 2:1a in a speech also directed to the priests. But there is no first plural there.

I had previously suggested that in 1:9b the first plural included the prophetic voice. But here in 3:15a it seems to be out of the question that the prophetic voice is part of the first plural. Malachi was the one confronting the second plural in 2:17a-h, the same second plural that now addresses itself as a first plural. Furthermore, in 3:13a-15d the Lord addresses the second plural and repeats basically the same message that Malachi had presented them in 2:17a-h.

To summarize, in the context of 3:14a-15d the second plural would seem to correspond to the people of Israel as in previous units and blocks. But given the connection to 1:9a-d, the second plural would seem to especially refer to the priests. The first plural would thus include the priests but also be somehow different from them. Perhaps, we should identify this first plural with some group inside of the priests. This would explain why the second plural in 3:13a-15d claims that they have kept (שׁמר) the precepts of the Lord (3:14d) and walked (הלך) before the Lord (3:14e), things that were only accomplished by the ideal priest of 2:7a and Levi in 2:6c.

In this unit the TIR witnesses how the second plural does not take the offer of the Lord to test him, and instead, systematically attacks the arguments the Lord has presented so far. In fact, the unit builds upon the accusations of 2:17a-h. Since those accusations were issued before the calls and offers by the Lord in block 3:7a-12c, the TIR is made to see that apparently, for the second plural, none of what the Lord said and offered matters. They are not ready to take his offers, they still have words for him.

At the end of the previous block, the TIR had been waiting expectantly for a reply on the part of the second plural. He has now witnessed a reply, but one that came indirectly and one that he did not anticipate. If the first plural are some priests who have indeed kept and walked in the ways of the Lord, does that mean that the Lord has accused them unfairly. Furthermore, are they right in saying that he favors the doers of wickedness? After all, the TIR saw how they tested God and escaped. Was it because of the blessing of God? At the end of this unit, another silence impacts the TIR, the silence of the Lord. Will the Lord not defend himself? Has he acknowledged the accusations of the second plural?

Malachi 3:16a-18d

This block is composed of three units: 3:16a-e, 3:17a-h, and 3:18a-d. None of these units indicates clearly both the speaker and addressee of the speeches. In 3:16a-e there is formally neither a speaker nor an addressee. In 3:17a-h the Lord is introduced as a speaker (3:17b), but there is no explicit addressee. In 3:18a-d there is no explicit

speaker, but the addressee is clearly a second plural (3:18a). Thus, we have two units with an unidentified speaker (3:16a-e and 3:18a-d) and one unit uttered by the Lord (3:17a-h). As for addresses, we have two units with unidentified destinataries (3:16a-e and 3:17a-h) and one unit addressed to a second plural (3:18a-d).

The syntax of the text clarifies who are the addressees in this unit. Units 3:17a-h and 3:18a-d start with a conjunction which indicates their dependence upon 3:16a-e. Although unit 3:17a-h does not have a clear addressee, unit 3:18a-d is clearly addressed to a second plural. Therefore, this whole block is addressed to a second plural. Contextually, this second plural must be understood as the second plural of the previous block.

The syntax of the text also helps to see who the speaker is in 3:16a-e and 3:18a-d. As was mentioned before, there is no indication in 3:18a-d of who the speaker is. But it was also mentioned that this unit is syntactically dependent on 3:16a-e. In 3:16a-e there is a short narrative about a new character in the text, the Fearers of the Lord (יראי יהוה). The speaker of this unit hears the Fearers of the Lord speak, but does not report their words. Once we identify the Fearers of the Lord, we can also identify the speakers of the unit.

The root ירא has been used relatively frequently in the text. Sadly, for the people of Israel, most uses of the root do not paint them in the best light. They are presented as simply not fearing the Lord (1:6f, 3:5c). In surprising contrast to Israel, the nations are portrayed as fearing the Lord (1:14g). The only positive use of ירא in relation to Israel is in connection to Levi (2:5bc). The Lord tells how Levi received life and peace as a fear (מורא) and he feared (ירא) him. The double use of the root emphasizes Levi's action.

The connection between the Fearers of the Lord and Levi is obvious for the TIR. He is the only person from the people of God who is portrayed as fearing the Lord so there are simply no other options. He can also see the double use of the root in regard to Levi, and that both 2:5b-c and 3:16c-e are narrative passages. Thus, the connection between Levi and the Fearers of the Lord is solidly established for the TIR, but how is he to understand that connection?

It is true that 2:5b-c is a narrative-like passage, but it is equally true that it is far removed contextually from 3:16a-e. Nonetheless, there is another narrative-like passage right in the previous block (3:15d). The narration about the speech (דבר) of the Fearers of the Lord (3:16a) must be connected to the previous speech (דבר) of the

second person plural (3:13c). This becomes apparent as the claims of the second plural are reexamined. They claim to having kept and walked in the ways of the Lord, things that pointed to Levi, the ideal priest. It is in this way that the TIA reveals to the TIR the true identity of the Fearers of the Lord and the complaining voices of the previous block; they are people that are either literally or spiritually descendants of Levi. As it turns out, the second plural does not represent wrongdoers in denial of their actions, but rather disillusioned servants of the Lord who question his righteousness, given the grave cultic and ethical evils around them.[50] The second plural of 3:13a-15c is no other than the Fearers of the Lord.[51]

What did the Fearers of the Lord say? The TIA simply does not give that information to the TIR. Although the prophetic voice had previously reported the words of other characters and also the character Lord had reported the words of others (3:14a), in this case nothing is said. This could be seen as an invitation to the TIR to bring meaning into the text. Conjectures aside, whatever they said, it must have been in relation to fearing the Lord and remembering his name (3:16e). Having identified the Fearers of the Lord and having briefly explored the content of their words, we are now able to identify the speaker of this unit.

The speaker must be someone who can hear the words of the second plural, as in fact he hears them (3:16a). We have seen that the Lord is an omniscient character in the text. But the Lord is present as a third person (3:16c) and is therefore not to be identified as the speaker of the unit. The second plural cannot be the speaker either, as they are formally absent from the text. As we have seen, this unit is about them identified as the Fearers of the Lord, but they do not appear as a second plural in this unit. There is only one option left, the prophetic voice in the text.

How does the prophetic voice hear the words of the second plural, the Fearers of the Lord? Is it because he is also an omniscient character? Perhaps. Apparently, the prophetic voice has access to information that is unreachable to other characters in

50. As was already mentioned, the description of the second plural as those who בקשׁ (seek) the lord (3:1d) and חפצ (desire) the messenger of the covenant (3:1f) is actual and not sarcastic. The TIA gives the TIR clues that only become clear as the text progresses.

51. This goes against the common assumption that the second plural in 3:13a-15d are "greedy doubters" and "proud complainers." See, Boloje and Groenewald, "Antithesis between יִרְאֵי יְהוָה and רְשָׁעִים: Malachi 3:13–21 [MT] as a Reconciliation of Yahweh's Justice with Life's Inequalities," 3. Niccacci notices the repeated use of the root but still identifies the second plural and the Fearers of the Lord as separate entities. Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 97. In contrast, Tiemeyer is of the opinion that, not only here but from the beginning of the book, Malachi's addresses are God's servants, who are genuinely surprised at his rejection of their service. See, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "'Giving a Voice to Malachi's Interlocutors,'" *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19 (2005): 173–92.

the text. For instance, in 2:16a Malachi is able to hear and report what the Lord has said in private. Furthermore, in 2:17a-h the prophetic voice also reported words that the second plural had spoken in private. It was the intervention of the prophetic voice that brought out the private words of these characters and made them known to other characters and to the TIR. But it is also possible that the prophetic voice is simply part of those who fear the Lord. If this is the case, then the prophetic voice is indeed part of the first plural of 3:15a. This would mean that the prophetic voice may hold the same opinion as those who honestly questioned and challenged the justice of the Lord, going so far as to even consider the insolent as blessed by the Lord. This would explain the Lord's soft touch towards the second plural in the previous block. Even his prophet might be having a hard time making sense of all that was happening in the society.[52]

The proceeding discussion has established that this block (3:16a-18d) is spoken by Malachi, the prophetic voice in the text, and is addressed to the second plural of the previous block; those who claim to having walked and kept the ways of the Lord. In the present block they are identified as the Fearers of the Lord.

The first unit (3:16a-e) is explicitly portrayed in the present moment of the text through the use of the macro syntactical marker אז.[53] Coupled to this temporal particle, the *qatal* form in 3:16a can also be seen as describing a present event. The three *wayyiqtol*-forms in 3:16c-e are used to narrate events that occur immediately after the words of 3:16a are uttered.

There is no clear indication concerning the location of the prophetic voice, as no new information is added as far as location is concerned. He is possibly close enough to the second plural of 3:13a-15d, now identified as Fearers of the Lord, to be able to hear what they say in private among themselves. We can presume that as this second plural is part of the larger second plural in previous blocks, they would also be located at the Temple. The present orientation of the text plus the common location of the speaker and characters give ample room to the TIA to continue to witness the communication.

The TIA subtly triggers the TIR to perceive that he is more than a communicative witness. The formal absence of an addressee in 3:16a-e gives the TIR the impression that he is also addressed in this unit. He is made to see, as well as the second plural

52. Niccacci is also of the opinion that it is very likely that the prophet is the speaker here. See, Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," 105.
53. This can also be seen as a link between the Fearers of the Lord and the second plural who is also introduced by a temporal particle (3:15a).

who is eventually revealed as the addressee, that as surely as the doers of wickedness had temporarily scaped God's judgement (3:5b-d), the Fearers of the Lord had a written record of their faithfulness (3:16e).[54] Furthermore, it was not correct to say that it was without profit to serve the Lord (3:14b) as he was indeed paying attention (3:16c) and hearing (3:16d).

The TIR was also made to feel empathy for the second plural. Whether the prophetic voice is an active part or not of the Fearers of the Lord, and consequently whether the TIR sides with him or not, they do speak to one another. The TIR is made to see that they do make a move for the Lord, but independent from the Lord and possibly also independent from the prophetic voice in the text. Despite all their possible shortcomings, they do fear the Lord and revere his name.

In the speech of the Lord (3:17a-h) there is no indication of the location of the Lord. In the previous unit, upon which this one is syntactically dependent, the Lord appears to be located at some sort of throne room where heavenly scribes are ready to record court proceedings. This may or may not be the same as the Temple location where the Lord has appeared in previous blocks. Since the Lord is an omniscient character, he need not necessarily be physically close to the Fearers of the Lord to be able to hear them.

The speech of the Lord, starting with a conjunction and having two *w^e^qatal*-forms, inherits its temporal aspects from the first unit in the block and thus appears to happen in conjunction with the events narrated in 3:16c-e. The speech happens in the present, but is about the future. The *qatal* form in 3:17b serves to mark the words as coming from the Lord, but does not seem to necessarily indicate when those words were said. The two *w^e^qatal*-forms indicate what the Lord will do: the Fearers of the Lord will be his treasure (3:17a) and he will spare them (3:17f).

In this unit the TIA uses again the formal lack of an addressee to draw the TIR in. He feels addressed. Further, if the Lord is, in fact, physically close to the Fearers of the Lord, they might possibly hear him as he speaks about them. In this way the TIR and

54. God is here related to the writing, presumably, of a book. This writing is connected to punishment of some and justification of others. For more insights into the action of writing in prophetic texts, see, Van Wieringen, "Writing and (Not) Reading the Torah (and Contrasting Texts) in the Book of Isaiah," 3. Nogalski considers the book of remembrance to refer to the book of the Twelve or possibly an earlier section of it, that recorded the actions of YHWH on behalf of his people, to serve as a source of didactic training of temple personnel. No substantial evidence is provided to back the claim. James D. Nogalski, "How Does Malachi's 'Book of Remembrance' Function for the Cultic Elite?," in *Priests and Cults in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, Ancient Near East Monographs 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 191–212.

the second plural are made aware of the special value that God places on the Fearers of the Lord, they are his treasure (3:17e). Despite their shortcomings, the Lord acknowledges them as sons who serve him (3:17h). This is an acknowledgement by the Lord that the second plural was indeed serving him, as they had claimed in 3:14b. This also comes to declare them to be good sons, according to the words of the Lord in 1:6a-b.

There is no indication of the location of the prophetic voice in the final speech in this block (3:18a-d). I presume, he continues at the Temple, close to the Fearers of the Lord, and the Lord himself. As this speech starts with a conjunction and contains two *w^{e}qatal* forms, it thus also inherits its temporal aspects from 3:16a-e. These aspects continue to give to the TIR ample access to the communication in the text. He can witness as the second plural is finally addressed directly. In what is possibly a direct reference to the call of the Lord in 3:7c, they are promised to be able to turn (3:18a). They are also promised to be able to make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked (3:18b). In this way the Lord seems to successfully put to rest the concerns for justice of his disillusioned servants, as expressed in 2:17d-h and 3:14a-15d.

As the block ends for the TIR, both the Lord and the second plural, renominalized as Fearers of the Lord, are vindicated in each other's eyes and in their own eyes. The Lord is acknowledged, and his name is regarded favorably by the Fearers of the Lord. And the Fearers of the Lord are acknowledged by him as faithful sons and promised an enduring positive remembrance by him. Finally, the Lord and his people appear on the same side to the eyes of the TIR. More importantly, he can see that the Fearers of the Lord were speaking the truth, but so was the Lord.

Malachi 3:19a-21d

This block is formed by units 3:19a-g and 3:20a-21d. In both units the TIA introduces speeches by the Lord. In unit 3:19a-g the Lord is presented as the speaker, as marked by 3:19f. The speech is about the "coming day" (3:19d) but is not formally addressed to anyone. The Lord is also presented as the speaker in unit 3:20a-21d, as marked by 3:21d. This speech is about the actions of a second plural on the day which the Lord is making (3:21c). This second plural is the addressee of the unit (3:20a). The Lord identifies them as "fearers of my name" (3:20b), a renominalization of the "Fearers of the Lord" of the previous block. Since 3:20a-21d is syntactically dependent on 3:19ag, we can deduce that 3:19ag is also addressed to the second plural. Thus, in this block the Lord is the speaker, and he addresses a second plural, the Fearers of the Lord.

Unit 3:19a-g starts with כי joined to הנה (3:19a), propelling the TIR forward. The speech of the Lord is delivered in the now moment in the text. This is evident from the use of the macro syntactical marker הנה, plus two participles (3:19ab). The content of the speech nonetheless is clearly concerning the future as two *w^e^qatal* forms (3:19c, 3:19d) and one *yiqtol* form (3:19g) indicate.

There is no indication of the location of the Lord. The addressee, who is not formally present, has consequently no specific location in the text. The continuation of the previous location at the Temple seems obvious. Both location and temporal orientation continue to provide access to the TIR, who since there is no specific addressee, is made to feel as the addressee of the unit.

After a block dominated by the complaints of the second plural, and another block dominated by the prophetic voice, the TIA presents a block dominated by the speech of the Lord, who confirms and elaborates on what the prophetic voice introduced in the previous block. He wants the TIR to take close notice of what is coming.

The Lord proclaims the imminent coming of "the day" (3:19a). This reference moves the attention of the TIR back to the only other specific day mentioned in the text. In 3:17c the Lord had already introduced "the day." There, he had promised possession and protection over the Fearers of the Lord. Here, the Lord promises them total destruction for insolents (3:19g) and doers of wickedness (3:19c), whom they had seen as blessed (3:15a) and as testing and escaping the Lord (3:15b-d). In this way the TIA clearly communicates to the TIR that the Lord will not only truly reward the righteous, but he will also truly punish the wicked. The Lord himself has affirmed so. This communicational effect of the TIA on the TIR is particularly strong since there is no specific addressee in this unit. The TIR is made to perceive the message of the Lord as directly for him.

The TIR is also aware of another day, noted previously in the text.[55] In 3:2a the prophetic voice announces the day of the coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant. This day, described with language relating to fire, results in the purification of the sons of Levi. This vindication of the sons of Levi seems to parallel the promise of protection of 3:17f for the Fearers of the Lord, the "descendants" of Levi. The day of 3:19a-g is also described with language relating to fire, but it results in the destruction of the wicked. The TIR is made to see that all references to a singular day

55. There are two uses of יום in the plural form. In 3:4a there is mention of "days of antiquity" and in 3:7a there is mention of "days of your fathers." The singular uses of the term seem to be quite distinct from the plural uses.

relate to the same eschatological event. On this day those who fear the Lord are saved, while those who fear him not are punished.

In 3:20a-21d there is again no indication of location, neither for the Lord nor for his addressee, a second plural whom he identifies as "fearers of my name." This unit, starting with a conjunction, is dependent on the previous one. Moreover, four *w^e^qatal* forms serve to mirror the temporal situation of the previous unit. The speech is given in the present moment of the text, but is about the future. The TIR, although not feeling directly addressed, continues to witness the communication.

This unit also relates to "the day" (3:21bc) and focusses on what happens to the Fearers of the Lord on it. Despite the presence of language relating to fire, i.e., the sun in 3:20c, the fearers of the Lord are promised healing and release. Here, as in the previous unit, the TIR sees that the same fire that consumes the wicked, heals the righteous. This is made plain and explicit to the TIR through the repetition of the phrase יום אשר אני עשׂה (day which I make). In 3:21b-c the wicked are turned to ashes on that day, while in 3:17d the Fearers of the Lord are turned into a treasured possession of the Lord.

In this unit the Fearers of the Lord are assured that the Lord will not only protect them, but also punish the wicked. There will be justice and retribution. However, this retribution is offered for the future, in the eschatological day, which the Lord is making. This places the TIR completely on the Lord's side again. He can see that the Lord has successfully addressed all the complaints of the second plural. He most certainly does not delight in the wicked (2:17g) and it is not useless to serve him (3:14b).

Malachi 3:22a-c

This block, only three clauses long, contains an unmarked direct speech by a first singular. The content of the speech indicates that the first singular must be identified as the Lord. The speech is addressed to a second plural. In the last three blocks (3:13a-15d, 3:16a-18d, 3:19a-21d), the second plural denotes the Fearers of the Lord. But given the reference to כל־ישׂראל (all Israel) in 3:22b, the second plural in this block points again to Israel (1:1b-1:2a), the whole nation (3:9bc), the sons of Jacob (3:6bc).

The imperative indicates that the speech of the Lord is delivered in the present moment of the text (3:22a). This continues to give access to the TIR to witness the communication between the Lord and the people of Israel. Nonetheless the location of the Lord seems to shift. As in the beginning of the book, here his location seems to be beyond the borders

of Israel. The Lord seems to be in Horeb (3:22b).[56] This change in the location of the Lord pulls the TIR from the Temple in Jerusalem to the mountain of God. There is no indication of a change in location of the second plural. This would mean that there is a separation created between the Lord and Israel. Apparently, the Lord wants his people to stand with him at Horeb, but so far, the text gives no indication that this is happening.

The TIR is impacted by the direct, unmarked, address of the Lord to the second plural. There is no mediation, no introduction for the Lord from the prophetic voice in the text. This makes the communication much more personal and forceful. This also makes the TIR feel more drawn into the communication. He is well aware of the symbolism of Horeb in the Israelite traditions. Since he has access to the text of the Hebrew Scriptures he can understand the references to Moses as a servant of the Lord,[57] Horeb,[58] and the phrase חקים ומשפטים (statutes and judgements).[59] If the TIR were not granted access to the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, none of these references, all used for the first time in the text here, would make any sense communicationally. The TIR is made to see that the Lord is calling the whole nation, and not just a part of it, to some sort of covenant renewal. They have turned away from his statutes (3:7a) and it is time to come back (3:7c). After the Lord regains the confidence of the Fearers of the Lord, now he turns his attention to gaining the alliance of the whole nation. The call to remember the law of Moses remains in force for all of God's people.[60]

The call from the Lord to זכר (remember) the תורת מֹשה, (Law of Moses) does not escape the TIR (3:22a). Besides the book of Malachi, the phrase "Law of Moses" appears another six times in the Hebrew Bible.[61] In four of those occasions, it is rendered in the Hebrew Bible as ספר תורת מֹשה (the book of the Law of Moses).[62] Previously, it was the Lord who pledged himself by writing a זכרון ספר (book of remembrance) about the Fearers of the Lord (3:16e). By using this phrase, the TIA

56. The "distance" of the Lord may be seen in his threat to come (בוא) and strike the land (ארץ). In the text of Malachi, the root בוא is used both to indicate a literal change in location of something or someone (1:13ef, 3:1c, g, 3:2a, 3:10a) and the occurrence of something or someone (3:19a, d, 3:23a). In 3:24c בוא seems to denote a change in location and not an occurrence on the part of the Lord towards the land (ארץ), which contextually should be seen as a reference to the land of Israel 3:12b. So, if the Lord would move towards Isarel in order to strike, where would he be moving from? Apparently from Horeb.
57. The phrase מֹשה עבדי is used only in Malachi and in Joshua 1:2, 7. But Moses appears frequently described in the Hebrew Bible as a servant of God. See for example, Deuteronomy 34:5, Joshua 1:1, 2 Kings 18:12, Daniel 9:11, Nehemiah 10:30, 1 Chronicles 6:34.
58. See for example, Exodus 3:1, Deuteronomy 1:6, 1 Kings 8:9, Psalm 106:19, 2 Chronicles 5:10.
59. This phrase is used only here in Malachi and in Deuteronomy 4:5, 8, 14.
60. Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript," 9.
61. Joshua 8:31, 32, Joshua. 23:6, 2 Kings 14:6, 23:25, Nehemiah 8:1.
62. Joshua 8:31, 23:6, 2 Kings 14:6, Nehemiah 8:1.

moves the TIR to realize that as the Lord has a written memorial, the Israelites also have a written memorial, the book of the Law of Moses. Will they listen to this memorial? Will they guide their lives by its principles?[63]

Malachi 3:23a-24d

This block contains an unmarked direct speech by a first singular. As with the previous block, the content of the speech identifies the speaker as the Lord. Also, like in the previous block, the addressee is a second plural. This second plural is constituted again, as in the previous unit, by the whole nation of Israel, the traditional recipients of the Scriptures; this makes intelligible the references to the character "Elijah" and the phrase the "Day of the Lord." Once again, we are made aware that the TIR has access to the Hebrew Scriptures, otherwise these refences would be rendered meaningless.[64]

There is no indication about the location of the Lord nor of the second plural. They do seem to be apart from one another, as the Lord announces that he might need to go and smite "the land", presumably the land of the second plural. This would mean that the Lord is in one place, most likely Horeb, where he was in the previous unit, and needs to move to the land of Israel to meet the second plural on its land.

The speech of the Lord is delivered in the present moment of the text. The macro-syntactical sign הנה plus a participle indicate that the action announced by the Lord is soon to happen. Two *w^{e}qatal* forms indicate alternative possible future actions (3:24a, d). The *yiqtol* form in 3:24c indicates the conditional element in the block.

The element of time, with its urgency, gives access to the TIR to witness the communication. As the block unfolds, however, he is moved to more than just a witness, as he is compelled to wait for a response from the second plural that extends beyond the text. The TIA seems to place the TIR close to the second plural. As the speech of the Lord focusses on them, the TIR is able to witness firsthand their response to the Lord. Thus, in complementary ways, elements of time and place allow the TIR to witness and eventually engage with the actions of the second plural.

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63. This block contains an abundance of terms pregnant with meaning according to the Israelite traditions. Nonetheless, I do not consider that the TIA has a particular passage of the Hebrew Scriptures to which the TIR should be directed. The multiple lexical connections do provide interesting possibilities. See for example, Joshua 1:7, Joshua 22:5, 2 Kings 21:8, Nehemiah 10:30, Daniel 9:11.
64. Sometimes information in the text can be recorded for the benefit of the implied reader, while the characters themselves are unaware of the meaning of the information. So, it could be argued that the character Israel does not know who Elijah is, while the TIR does, since he has access to the Hebrew Bible. This, while technically possible, does not seem to be the case here. See, Van Wieringen, "Writing and (Not) Reading the Torah (and Contrasting Texts) in the Book of Isaiah," 2.

In this unit, as in the last, the TIR is impacted by the direct, i.e., unmarked, communication by the Lord, towards the second plural. This, combined with the macro syntactical marker הנה and the personal pronoun, make the communication from the Lord personal, but also urgent and forceful.

The opening phrase in 3:23a draws the TIR to past declarations of the Lord. In 2:3a the same construction formed by interjection, first singular marker, participle, preposition, second person marker, direct object marker, and noun appears. There, the phrase served to introduce impending judgment upon the priests who have failed to put something to heart. Will it have the same function here? Even more directly, the TIR is pointed to 3:1a. There, the construction interjection, first singular marker, and participle also appear. Moreover, the participle is the same as in 3:23a. The TIR can see that the TIA is interpreting for him the meaning of מלאכי, it is none other than a character now identified as Elijah the Prophet.[65] The use of this character once again evidences that the TIR has access to the Hebrew Bible, as without it, this reference is incomprehensible.[66] The TIA brings the character Elijah into the text and the TIR can understand the reference, because he has access to the Hebrew Bible.[67]

The sudden appearance in the text of the character Elijah causes surprise to the TIR. Similar to Moses in the previous block, Elijah is brought up for the first time at the end of the book. But, unlike Moses who, according to Israelite tradition, received, wrote, and delivered laws that the Lord had mentioned previously in the book, there is apparently no reason to invoke Elijah the prophet at the end of the book.

What communicational impact does the TIA wants to achieve on the TIR, by bringing up Elijah and implicating him in a last day reconciliation? Perhaps the TIA brings up Elijah because he, like Moses, was also at Horeb.[68] Perhaps he wants the TIR to connect Elijah's day of fire with the Lord's day of fire.[69] Perhaps he wants to trigger the TIR to connect Elijah's involvement with the turning (סבב) of the heart of Israel back to God,

65. The text uses the alternative spelling אליה instead of the more common אליהו. See for example, 2 Kings 1:13.
66. This fact also reveals a possibility condition of the TIA, as he would need to be writing after the stories of prophet Elijah were circulated.
67. This means that the text of Malachi needed to be written after the Hebrew Bible had at least one book having references to a character named Elijah. Some other elements in the text also denote possibility conditions: the word פחה in 1:8e, the winged sun 3:20c-d, the mention of the Temple 3:1c, the devastation of Edom 1:4b, etc. None of these are discussed here, as they are not relevant for the purpose of this research.
68. See, 1 Kings 19:8.
69. See, 1 Kings 18:24.

with the present turning of hearts.[70] Whatever the reason, the use of Elijah connects the TIR to another great prophet and another section of the Hebrew Bible.[71]

Elijah is introduced in relation to the day of the Lord. The TIR can see that this day is described as הגדול והנורא, the great and fearful (3:23a). These descriptions have been accredited before only to the Lord. But here, they are given to his day. This moves the TIR to see some amalgamation between the Lord and his day. How is the TIR to perceive the relationship between the Lord and his day?

A related but different difficulty for the TIR regards the title of the day itself. Why does the Lord speak about the "day of the Lord" and not about "my day", or about the day which he is making, as in 3:17d, 3:21c? Especially noteworthy is the direct correspondence to the phrase in Joel 3:4 (לפני בוא יום יהוה הגדול והנורא [before the coming of the great and frightening Day of the Lord]). The TIR could then simply take this as a proper name since the phrase is known to him from prophetic writings.[72] Nonetheless, the TIA has given enough clues in the text that could move the TIR to consider the possibility that the Lord is referring to another Lord, and to his day.

Previously, the TIR had been introduced to a day that belonged to the lord and messenger of the covenant (3:2a) and this day was described with elements related to fire (3:3ab). Later he was introduced to a day which the Lord would make (3:17d, 3:21c), and this day was also described with elements related to fire (3:19b, d). Why are the days of the messenger of the covenant and of the Lord described in such similar ways? Furthermore, they both have the Temple as theirs (3:1c, 3:10b), both have days in which fire is present (3:2c, 3:19b), and both protect those who serve the Lord (3:3c, 3:17f). Is the lord and messenger of the covenant finally proved to be the Lord? The TIA has been provoking the TIR to answer yes and no, at the same time.

As the TIA concludes the text, he presents the TIR with another evidence that ritual elements are not a core part of the message of the book. The deciding factor that the Lord presents to Israel is not cultic but social, as it deals with family reconciliation.

70. See, 1 Kings 18:37.
71. "Mentioning Mount Horeb and just these two prophets also connects the Pentateuch with the Prophets. These verses could have been added not only as a conclusion to Malachi, but as a fitting end to all the twelve minor prophets (the book of the twelve), or to the Prophets section in its entirety (Joshua-Kings plus the fifteen writing prophets), or even to the complete first two sections of the Hebrew Bible: the Pentateuch and Prophets." See, Jane Beal, ed., *Illuminating Moses: A History of Reception from Exodus to the Renaissance*, *Illuminating Moses*, vol. 4, Comentaria (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 46.
72. The phrase יום יהוה is used in the books of the later prophets; it appears only in Isaiah and the book of the twelve (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 3:4, 4:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Malachi 3:23).

The hearts of fathers need to turn toward sons and the hearts of sons need to turn to their fathers. What is envisioned is a reconciliation that runs both ways, but the fathers are to take the initiative. The TIA may even intend the TIR to perceive here a possible reversal of the grim fate of fathers and sons, as described in Ezekiel 5:10, the only other reference in the Hebrew Bible about fathers acting on sons and sons acting on their fathers.

God has appeared in 1:6c and 2:10a as a father, but the TIR sees that this message of reconciliation does not concern primarily the relationship between God as father and Israel as son. The very first words spoken by the Lord in the text were, I have loved you (1:2a). There is no need for the heart of the Lord to return to Israel, but he has, indeed, called for them to return (3:7c). The ancestors of Israel also appear as fathers in 2:10b and 3:7a, nonetheless, the TIR can see that this message is not about reconciliation between Israelites and their ancestors. They are long dead, which makes a turning of hearts quite unlikely. The message of reconciliation is for present fathers and sons in Israel. As with neglected wives and possibly neglected children, as with the poor, the fatherless, and the foreigners, even as with tithes and offerings, the concern of the text is deeply ethical. As in 2:10a-12c, an ethical concern affects a covenantal concern, which in turn affects the existence of those in the wrong in ethical issues.

If generational reconciliation is not accomplished, the Lord himself threatens to come. By using the particle פן the Lord presents the only other option to reconciliation,[73] striking the land with חרם, a ban of destruction. This threat is directed against the ארץ 3:24)d). The only previous mention of ארץ is in 3:12b, where the Lord had offered the possibility of removing the curse from Israel and making them a delight. Now, they could remain under the curse and more than that, they could be under חרם. Instead of going from cursed to blessed, the nation could go from cursed to destroyed.[74]

Priests had previously been called to put something to heart (2:2b). At that time, they did not, and were cursed (2:2g). Now, all the people are called to bring their hearts together. If they do not, they will be turned into חרם. How will they respond?

The Lord had already announced his coming and now he declared it again (3:24c). The TIR can see in the text two entities who are בוא (coming) and they are both related

73. In biblical Hebrew, פן is a particle that negates dependent clauses. It seems to indicate that something is certainly coming unless some other action stops it. See, Swanson, James, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament*, s.v. פן; Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. פן.
74. This declaration from the Lord also runs contrary to the offer made in Zechariah 14:11, where the possibility of no more חרם is offered to Jerusalem.

to days which are also coming. In 3:1 the lord and messenger of the covenant comes to his temple and the day of his coming is one of purification by fire for the sons of Levi (3:2b-c). In 3:19a-d there is a day which is coming and burns the doers of wickedness. In 3:23a, this day is renominalized as the "day of the Lord." In 3:1a-b, although the lexeme בוא is not used, the idea of preparations for a coming of the Lord is evident and in 3:1g the Lord corroborates that he himself is coming.

It is already clear for the TIR that the day when the lord and messenger of the covenant cleanses the sons of Levi is the same day when the doers of wickedness are consumed. Now he sees that those who refuse the reconciliation brought about by Elijah, and therefore choose to remain in wickedness, are to be destroyed by the Lord. This seems to be yet another hint from the TIA that the lord and messenger of the covenant and the Lord are somehow different, but also the same.

How does the TIA intend to affect the TIR with the mention of חרם? In the only possible way that the Hebrew Bible would allow, with horror.[75] Aside from the Scriptures, the TIR has no frame of reference to understand what a ban of destruction is. The realization that the fate of Israel could be total destruction would indeed signify the ultimate curse.[76] The message of ultimate destruction is so powerfully grim that even real readers, ancient and modern, have sought to lessen it by repeating the promise of the coming of Elijah at the end of the book.[77]

Notes on the Overall Communicative Dynamics in Malachi

After examining the communicative situation in each of the textual units in Malachi and discussing how it affects the TIR, it will be convenient to summarize some important elements by way of a few remarks.

75. See Leviticus 27:29 and Joshua 6:17 for examples of חרם from the Torah and the Prophets. See also, Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, s.v. חרם; Gesenius and Tregelles, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, s.v. חרם.
76. "Usually ḥāram means a ban for utter destruction, the compulsory dedication of something which impedes or resists God's work, which is considered to be accursed before God." Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. חרם.
77. Jewish readers also repeat the second to the last verse of Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Lamentations. See, Malachi 3:24 in Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 269; *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985). S. D. Snyman, "Malachi's Controversial Conclusion: Problems and Prospects," *Acta Theologica* 40 (2020): 124–36.

Speakers and Addresses

We can succinctly portray the results of the information considered about the speakers and addressees of each section of the book.[78] Please see the following table.

1:1a-b Speaker(S): Malachi - Addressee (A): All Israel
- 1:2a-5c S: Malachi - A: All Israel
  - 1:6a-2:9c S: Malachi and Righteous Israel[79] - A: Priests
  - 2:10a-16f S: Malachi and Righteous Israel - A: Unrighteous Israel
  - 2:17a-h S: Malachi - A: Righteous Israel
- 3:1a-b S: Lord - A: TIR
- 3:1c-4a S: Malachi- A: Righteous Israel
  - 3:5a-d S: Malachi- A: Righteous Israel
  - 3:6a-d S: Lord - A: All Israel
    - 3:7a-12c S: Malachi - A: All Israel
    - 3:13a-15d S: Malachi - A: Righteous Israel
  - 3:16a-18d S: Malachi - A: Righteous Israel/Fearers of the Lord
  - 3:19a-21d S: Malachi - A: Righteous Israel/Fearers of my name
- 3:22a-c S: Lord - A: All Israel
- 3:23a-24d S: Lord - A: All Israel

Figure 6 – Speakers and addressees in Malachi

Main Characters in the Text

Even a cursory look at the table above reveals that there are three main characters in the book, the Lord, Israel, and Malachi. This is exactly what the TIA introduced to the TIR in the heading of the book of Malachi. The heading plays a very significant role in introducing the important characters in the communication and how these relate to one another. All other characters that appear in the book are complements to these main characters.[80]

The first character mentioned in the heading is the Lord. He is, as expected, an omniscient character. He is also presented as the originator of the communication in

78. The reader might be confused noting that previously I have mentioned that the Lord is "presented" or "introduced" as speaker of units, but here I claim that the speaker is the TIA/Malachi. What I mean is exactly that, the actual speaker is the TIA/Malachi, but he "presents" or "introduces" another entity, usually the Lord, as speaker of embedded speeches.
79. The character I am labeling as "Righteous Israel" is introduced in the text as "Fearers of the Lord" in 3:16.
80. Other characters in the text either seem to expand the original characters or supplement them. The priests, Judah, and the Fearers of the Lord seem to be elaborations or expansions of Israel. Other characters such as Esau, Edom, the nations, Levi, Jacob, Moses, and Elijah provide a complement, a backdrop to the main characters.

the text. Moreover, he also ends the communication in Malachi, as he has the last word in the book, literally and figuratively.

The second character introduced in the heading is Israel. This collective character is presented as the destinatary of the communication.[81] Israel is mentioned at the heading and conclusion, but is rather absent in the body of the book. The TIA does not elaborate, but rather approaches Israel through secondary characters such as Levi, Judah, priests, etc.

Israel is a complex character as its people have an ambivalent attitude towards the Lord. All of Israel is loved by the Lord, but part of it despises the Lord, while another part wants everyone to honor the Lord. The TIA uses different techniques to attack and unmask the hypocrisy of both parts in Israel. All of Israel is demonstrably guilty before the Lord, but he is willing to cleanse them.

The choice of the ultimate destiny of Israel is presented as in their hands. They are called to be in harmony with the Lord and with each other. The results of their choice would be blessing or complete destruction.

The third and last character mentioned in the heading is Malachi. The TIA introduces the character Malachi and uses this persona to function as the prophetic voice in the text. The TIA uses Malachi as the discourser in the text; he introduces all marked speeches and is the voice behind almost all unmarked speeches.

Malachi as a character, nonetheless, is not fleshed out by the TIA. He is present in the text and is on stage as the heading reveals, but unlike other characters, Malachi remains in the background and very seldom his own words and actions are seen in the text. In this way Malachi seems to exist closer to the world of the TIA than to the world of the characters. He functions almost as the TIA's mouthpiece. It is very difficult to see where the fusing of TIA and the character Malachi begins or ends. Malachi functions somewhere in between an all-knowing discourser and an omniscient character.

81. The idea of a corporate character is not to be confused with the idea of a corporate personality, where individuals are conceived as legally responsible exclusively as part of a group and where individuals are considered incapable of self-consciences apart from that group. I label "Israel" as a corporate character because metonymically the name of the patriarch is being used to designate his descendants. For a discussion of corporate personality, see, J. W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1970): 1–16.

The Communicative Role of the Lord

The book starts with the Lord giving his word through the character Malachi, but as the text unfolds the character Lord takes an ever more prominent role in the communication. In the second half of the book, the TIA allows the character Lord to speak directly, without introduction. Thus, in the second half of the book, the TIA and the character Lord seem to coincide for the TIR. This creates the illusion of equality between the TIA and the Lord. This is nonetheless just that, an illusion.[82]

While the Lord is allowed to address other characters directly, he is never allowed to introduce other characters. In this way the TIA manipulates the character Lord to create a great communication impact on the TIR. The communication structure in the text is clear nonetheless, the TIA embodied as Malachi, controls the Lord and all other characters and not the other way around. In other words, it is not the Lord who has the prophetic voice in the text. It is the prophetic voice in the text that performs the voice of the Lord. The character Lord is not the TIA. He is a communicational tool in the hand of the TIA.

The reason for the evolution in the communicative role of the Lord is not explained in the text. Did Malachi not deliver the word of the Lord in a way pleasing to him? Was Malachi not capable of delivering the word of the Lord? Did the Lord change his mind about what he wanted Malachi to do? The text does not say.

Whatever the case, the TIA gives the character Lord a more prominent role communicationally as the text progresses. The role that Malachi fulfills at the beginning of the text is largely taken up by the Lord as the text ends. The result is that there is an increasing momentum and as the book concludes the words of the Lord carry much more communicational impact towards other characters and the TIR.

The Communicative Role of Malachi

The table at the start of this section would seem to indicate that the character Malachi dominates the communication in the book. That assertion would be correct, yet incorrect, depending on what one means by "dominating" the communication.

On the one hand, the TIA does take on the persona of Malachi and uses him to manipulate other characters. Despite appearances, it is Malachi and not the Lord who controls the communication in the text. He is technically the speaker in most blocks, since he is the one introducing other characters.

82. The relationship between the TIA and the character Lord will be further explored as we consider the communicative role of Malachi.

On the other hand, since the TIA and Malachi are fused, the character Malachi is very dimly sketched, besides the heading (1:1a-b), it is not possible to clearly distinguish his words from the words of the TIA in the book.[83] Furthermore, Malachi often appears as the speaker, as he is used by the TIA to introduce other characters, but it is the other characters that do most of the talking. This makes it difficult to distinguish his words from theirs.

On few occasions nonetheless, the TIA/Malachi does speak directly to other characters or to the TIR. These instances are communicatively important and have a special relevance for the TIR.

Staged Dialogue

The way that the Lord, Israel, and Malachi interact in the heading is descriptive of the way communication plays out in the rest of the text. The word of the Lord comes to Israel, not directly, but through the hand of Malachi. We see this indirect communication unfold in the text. It is Malachi who introduces the speeches of the Lord, and through the Lord, also the embedded speeches of Israel. Very seldom does the Lord speak directly to his people. In most of the text, the Lord speaks through Malachi, who introduces his speeches. In turn, the Lord introduces the words of Israel.

The result of this dynamic is that there is no dialogue between the Lord and his people. There is not one occasion in the text where the TIA introduces the words of one character and then the words of the other character. Rather, the TIA introduces a character and his words, usually the Lord, who in turn introduces another character and its words, usually Israel or a part of it. The characters do not interact on the same level. Malachi controls the Lord and the Lord in turn controls Israel. This kind of interaction I have termed a staged dialogue.

As the book unfolds, the TIA allows the character Lord to address Israel or parts of it directly. There is still no dialogue, but when the Lord speaks directly to Israel his words are very important communicatively, both to Israel and to the TIR.

Blessing and Cursing

Both the character Malachi and the Lord use curses in their unmarked speeches. The Lord even draws the book to a close by threatening the ultimate curse. The character Lord also offers a blessing for Israel. This reveals that for the TIA cursing and blessing

83. This is very similar to the communication situation of the TIA in Isaiah. See, Van Wieringen, "Sirach 48:17-25 and the Isaiah-Book: Hezekiah and Isaiah in the Book of Sirach and the Reader-Oriented Perspective of the Isaiah-Book," 200.

are seen as very important communicative elements used to motivate people towards proper behavior. The next chapter will discuss in more detail the communicational implications of blessing and cursing.

The Evolving Role of the TIR

The TIA uses several techniques to move and involve the TIR. As the text progresses, the TIR becomes more than just a discursive witness and is called on to act beyond the text. As the text comes to a close several issues remain open, and it is up to the TIR to seek for their unravelling or realization. When will Elijah come to prepare the way of the Lord? Who is the lord and messenger of the covenant? Is he the Lord? Will Israel accept the call of the Lord to test him and be blessed? Will they embark on generational reconciliation and be protected in the Day of the Lord, or will they remain aloof and suffer the ultimate curse by becoming הרם? The text offers no answers, and it is up to TIR to respond. His actions fall outside of the boundaries of the text.

The Concern for Proper Relationships

The goal of the TIA is to move Israel and the TIR to a correct relationship with the Lord and among themselves. The calls in the text make clear that proper relation with the Lord does not exist in isolation. The end goal is ethical behavior in the social life. All relations, with the divine and with humans, are meant to be harmonious.

Since the text portrays no response on the part of Israel, the TIA expects the TIR to choose to act ethically. Cultic issues, blessing and cursing, and other techniques used to involve the TIR are not meant to be understood as in opposition to ethical living, but they are simply less important. The end goal is ethical living. Everything else in the communication is a way towards that end.

Chapter 5

COMMUNICATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF BLESSING AND CURSING IN MALACHI

At the end of the chapter on semantics, I discussed how blessing and cursing functioned as a unifying device connecting different semantic lines in the book. In a similar way, building upon last chapter's study of the communication in Malachi, I will now describe how blessing and cursing are used by the TIA to impact other characters and the TIR.

This chapter seeks to bring out and sum up the communicational implications of blessing and cursing in Malachi. We will start by analyzing high-level communication in Malachi. We will then note how blessings and curses appear at this communicative level. Next, we will examine the communicative use of blessings and curses by the TIA to manipulate the characters and the TIR. Finally, we will draw some conclusions about the communicative effect of blessings and curses in the book of Malachi.

Overview of High-Level Communication in Malachi

High-level communication refers to exchanges that happen at the level of the TIA and the TIR. This level of communication can be analyzed independently from low-level communication, which happens at the level of the characters.[1] In this section, we will focus on the units in the book of Malachi where communication happens at a high level. We will focus first on the sender role, and then on the receiver role.

On the sender role, we will note instances where the TIA addresses an entity directly, without using any characters. We will also note instances when the TIA addresses an entity indirectly, by allowing a character to address other entities directly without any introduction and thus essentially letting this character momentarily take over its role. I consider this communication as high level, because although a character is involved, this character is momentarily allowed by the TIA to function in ways typical of the TIA. On the receiving role, we will note instances when the TIR is addressed by the TIA at a high level, either directly or indirectly.

I will use a series of tables to present in a concise way the information related to high-level communication in the book of Malachi. Clauses or units mentioned in the tables will not be discussed, since that was already done in the previous chapter. For elaboration, please see the respective sections there. The function of the tables is to highlight where high-level communication happens in Malachi.

To begin, the following table lists all the instances when the TIA addresses an entity directly, without using any characters. As was discussed in the previous chapter, it is

1. For a fuller discussion of high-level and low-level communication, see the Communication Analysis section in chapter 1.

difficult to ascertain when the TIA is the speaker as opposed to when Malachi is speaking. Thus, this list includes both instances when the TIA and the prophetic voice, Malachi, addresses an entity without any introduction.

Reference	Content of the Communication
1:1ab	Heading of the book
1:5a-c	You (all Israel) will see that the Lord is great
1:9a-d	You (priests), seek the face of God!
1:14a-g	The cheater is cursed
2:7a-c	The priest is a messenger of God
2:11a-12c	Abomination was done. May the Lord cut the man who did it
2:16a-b	The Lord hates divorce
3:1c-4a	The coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant and his work
3:16a-e	The Fearers of the Lord speak, and he listens
3:18a-d	The Fearers of the Lord will see the difference between righteous and wicked

Figure 7 – Instances when the TIA/Malachi address other entities directly

High-level communication happens in the sender role not only when the TIA address other entities directly. In the second half of the book, the TIA occasionally allows the character Lord to address other entities without any introduction. This allows the TIA to achieve a high communicational impact by momentarily allowing the Lord full control over the communication in the text. The following table lists all the instances when his happens in the book.

Reference	Content of the Communication
3:1a-b	I am sending my messenger and he will prepare the way before me
3:6a-d	Because I do not change, you have not been destroyed
3:8a-9c	With the curse you are cursed, you are robbing me
3:22a-c	Remember the law of Moses
3:23a-24d	I am sending Elijah and he will turn hearts. Otherwise, I will strike the land

Figure 8 – Instances when the Lord addresses other entities directly

The other end of high-level communication in Malachi corresponds to the receiving pole. The following table lists all instances where the TIA addresses the TIR. The list

includes instances when the TIA addresses the TIR directly as himself or as Malachi, and indirectly when he allows the character Lord to momentarily control the communication. Here again there will be no discussion of clauses or units mentioned. Please see the corresponding sections in the previous chapter.

Reference	Content of the Communication
1:1a-b	Heading of the book
1:14a-g	The cheater is cursed
2:7a-c	The priest is a messenger of God
2:11a-12c	Abomination was done. May the Lord cut the man who did it
3:1a-b	I am sending my messenger and he will prepare the way before me
3:2a-4a	The work of the lord and messenger of the covenant
3:16a-e	The Fearers of the Lord speak, and he listens
3:17a-h	The Fearers of the Lord will be spared
3:19a-g	The day is coming

Figure 9 – Instances when the TIR is addressed directly and indirectly

As study of semantics identified several semantic lines that run in the text, this brief overview of high-level communication in Malachi shows that several issues are important for the TIA. Each issue that the TIA chooses to present at a high communicational level, either at the sending or receiving end, is one that he wants the TIR to note in a special way. Moreover, repeated use of an issue or topic at a high communicational level would denote that the TIA confers great communicational importance on the issue or topic at hand. Lastly, issues that appear at a high level at both ends of the communication would indicate the greatest communicational importance for the TIA.

This section has identified where and how communication takes place at a high-level in Malachi. As a summary of the discussion, the following table presents all the high-level communication in the book, both at the sending and receiving ends. The following section will examine the role that blessing and cursing play in high-level communication.

Sending Role				**Receiving Role**	
TIA/Malachi		**The Lord**		**TIR**	
Reference	Content of the Communication	Reference	Content of the Communication	Reference	Content of the Communication
1:1ab	Heading of the book			1:1a-b	Heading of the book
1:5a-c	You (all Israel) will see that the Lord is great				
1:9a-d	You (priests), seek the face of God!				
1:14a-g	The cheater is cursed			1:14a-g	The cheater is cursed
2:7a-c	The priest is a messenger of God			2:7a-c	The priest is a messenger of God
2:11a-12c	Abomination was done. May the Lord cut the man who did it			2:11a-12c	Abomination was done. May the Lord cut the man who did it
2:16a-b	The Lord hates divorce				
		3:1a-b	I am sending my messenger and he will prepare the way before me	3:1a-b	I am sending my messenger and he will prepare the way before me
3:1c-4a	The coming of the lord and messenger of the covenant and his work			3:2a-4a	The work of the lord and messenger of the covenant
		3:6a-d	Because I do not change, you have not been destroyed		
		3:9a-c	With the curse you are cursed, you are robing me		
3:16a-e	The Fearers of the Lord speak, and he listens			3:16a-e	The Fearers of the Lord speak, and he listens
				3:17a-h	The Fearers of the Lord will be spared

Figure 10 – Summary of high-level communication in Malachi

Sending Role				Receiving Role	
TIA/Malachi		**The Lord**		**TIR**	
3:18a-d	The Fearers of the Lord will see the difference between righteous and wicked				
				3:19a-g	The day is coming
		3:22a-c	Remember the law of Moses		
		3:23a-24d	I am sending Elijah and he will turn hearts. Otherwise, I will strike the land		

Figure 10 – Continued

Communicational Use of Blessings and Curses

Even a cursory glance at the previous overview makes it apparent that, although cursing is not the only issue present at high levels of the communication, it is one that appears consistently, both at the sending and receiving ends. At the sending end, the TIA/Malachi (1:14a-g, 2:11a-12c) and the Lord (3:9a-c, 3:23a-24d) issue curses at a high communicational level. On the receiving end, the TIR has direct access to both curse declarations issued by the TIA (1:14a-g, 2:11a-12c). The only plausible explanation is that curses are important for the TIA, and he wants to use them to affect the TIR.

There are no blessings at a high communicational level in Malachi. But the Lord, who does utter curses at that level, also offers a blessing (3:10e-11c). This would imply that both blessing and cursing are important communicational elements for the TIA.

Granted, cursing and blessing are different issues, but they do belong together. They appear together in the Hebrew Torah as well as in prophetic and wisdom texts.[2] Furthermore, in previous chapters we have noted that blessing and cursing are a relevant semantic issue. In this section, we will explore how blessing and cursing are used by the TIA to manipulate the TIR. We will proceed in the order that these are introduced in the text.

2. See for example, Genesis 12:3, Jeremiah 20:14, Proverbs 3:33. Jenni and Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. ארר.

The first formal curse is introduced in the text in 1:14a-d. Here the TIA/Malachi calls for a curse on a "cheater." The curse statement is given at the level of the TIA and is motivated by cultic reasons, as it is related to defective offerings. This cheater is not the addressee of the curse declaration. The declaration is formally directed towards no one. Contextually, the addressee would seem to be the priests, the addressees of 1:9a-14g. The content of the curse though, does not point to a priestly figure. Furthermore, communicationally, the addressee is the TIR, he is the one who receives the force of the declaration in the absence of a formal addressee. So, the TIR hears, as the cheater is cursed in his presence. This moves the TIR to consider first, who is this cheater? and second, how is he related to this cheater?

The "cheater" turns out to be a non-priestly entity, since he is described as one who makes a vow and offers from his own flock. This cheater must then be someone from Israel, the destinatary of the communication in the book (1:1b). This declaration is meant to move both Israel and the TIR to concern and to change. But the text does not show any response from Israel. On the side of the TIR, this curse would cause him to identify more with Malachi and the group that sided with him in 1:9b. However, it is unclear how this identifying is meant to move the TIR emotionally. Israel is being cursed, but that does not mean that the TIR is being cursed. Is he meant to pity or despise Israel? We do not yet know.

The second curse statement in the text is issued by the Lord against the priests (2:2e-h). This statement is given at the level of the characters. Here the Lord issues a command, which in turn involves a warning and a threat. The command is to honor him. The warning is that priests have already been cursed. The threat is that they can be further cursed in the form of harm to their "seed", whether children or crops, and by their own humiliation before the people. As there is no recorded response from the priests, the TIR cannot see whether they respond positively or not.

The TIR witnesses this warning and threat expressed as a curse and is moved to pity the priests. Truly, the Lord has the power to seriously harm them, but his intention is to restore and not to destroy them (2:4b). In this way, the character Lord gives direction and clarity to the message carried by Malachi, as he is supposed to indeed carry his word (1:1b). By issuing a curse declaration right after Malachi's, the Lord colors and nuances the previous curse by his prophet. The intention of the curse is redemptive, not destructive.

In 2:12a-c we find another curse statement by the TIA/Malachi. The curse is about a "man" but is formally not addressed to anyone. The TIR functions communicationally as the addressee, as this declaration is given at the communicational level of the TIA/TIR.

This curse by the TIA is similar to his previous one (1:14a-d) in that it is called on an anonymous non-priestly Israelite, but it is unlike the previous one in that it does not use formal curse language. The intention of the declaration nonetheless is clearly curse-like and envisions the destruction of the offender.

The reason for the curse is both cultic and social. The "man" from the tents of Jacob, thus an Israelite, offers sacrifices while being disloyal to his wife, by abandoning her, and possibly his children, the "seed of God" (2:15d), by neglecting them. He is also being disloyal to his community by marrying a foreigner. As in the previous curses, the text does not elaborate on the response of the offender. The TIR is made to see that the defectiveness in this case does not pertain to the offering, but to the offerer. It is not the offering which is defective, but the one offering it. In this way the TIR is moved to see that curses are used not just to promote proper behavior on the cultic domain, but are also powerful tools in condemning wrongdoing and motivating to right action in the social sphere as well.

As in all previous curses, the TIR is not made to feel directly targeted by the curse. In 1:14 the curse is directed towards a cheater while he has sided with Malachi and the Lord from the beginning of the text. In 2:3 the curse is upon priests, while there is no indication whatsoever in the text that the TIR identifies as one. Here in 2:12a-c the curse is for those who do abomination but pretend they do not and continue their cultic life as usual. This time, the TIR has again sided with Malachi and his group, those who complain about the polluting of the Lord's covenant. That situation is about to change as the next curse encompasses the whole nation, and therefore, the TIR as well.

Following the second curse statement by the TIA/Malachi, there is also a second curse statement by the Lord. His curse, in 3:9a-c, is the strongest and widest curse declaration in the book. In an unmarked statement, given at the level of the TIA, the Lord pronounces a curse on the whole nation of Israel. The reason for this curse by the Lord is both cultic and social, as was the last curse by the TIA/Malachi. By withholding tithes and offerings (3:8e) the people were betraying both the Lord and others in the society who depended on those gifts for their livelihood. As was the case before, there is no response from the people to the curse.

This curse declaration impacts the TIR in a different way than previous curses. Former curses were either directed to individuals or to sections of the society that the TIR does not identify with. But now there is no way for the TIR to feel that the curse does not affect him. The heading of the book identified the TIA of the text as Malachi, but it also identified the TIR as Israel. This curse is declared upon all Israel. In this way, the TIR is made to feel the full brunt of the curse declaration.

This second curse declaration by the Lord also serves to nuance the second curse declaration by the TIA/Malachi. In his first curse, the Lord focused and gave proper motivation to the first curse declaration by the TIA/Malachi. In his second curse the Lord pointed out that, even though many in Israel did give a sacrificial offering, "the whole nation" was robbing him in tithes and offerings. Apparently, most, if not all in Israel, did not even reach the level of hypocritical worship that Malachi complained about in 2:12. The declaration of the Lord continues to give proper motivation to the curses, which is to restore proper relationship with his people. That is also seen through the only true declaration of blessing in the book.

Following the strongest and widest curse declaration, the Lord offered a blessing to all Israel in 3:10e-12b. This blessing was such that it would potentially overturn and supersede any previous curse. It even included being blessed by other nations (3:12a). This potential blessing is given at the level of the characters. Unfortunately, and similarly to previous occasions, there is no response on the part of the people.

After being moved to serious concern, the TIR is now moved to wonder and amazement at the Lord's mercy in potentially overturning all curses into a blessing. He is moved and motivated to accept the offer of the Lord. Sadly, the only action that can be considered a response to the cursing and blessing in the book is not positive.

In 3:15a those who will eventually be identified as "Fearers of the Lord" (יראי יהוה) pronounce a "pseudo-blessing" on the insolent (עשׂי רשׁעה) at the level of the characters. These Fearers of the Lord are those who have before sided with Malachi in reproaching the evils in Israel (1:9b, 2:10c). The insolent have not appeared before in the text, but given the parallelism with the "doers of wickedness" in 3:15b, they are to be identified as those in Israel who have been denounced as sinners throughout the book.

I identify the action of the soon to be named Fearers of the Lord as a pseudo-blessing or an informal blessing because they do not use the term ברך but rather use אשׁר. In doing so they do not take upon themselves the prerogative of giving an actual blessing

but imitate the nations who would recognize the blessing (ברכה) of God and declare Israel to be blessed (אשר).[3]

This action is designed to shock the TIR, especially since those who declared the insolent blessed were those who claimed to have kept the charge of the Lord and walked before him. He knows that they have consistently sided with Malachi and the Lord. He knows that they are not part of those who hypocritically worship the Lord (2:12c). How can it be that they so misunderstand the Lord and his actions? The TIR is also shocked by the lack of response from the Lord to their blasphemous declaration, which rebutted and contradicted his curses and blessing. The Lord lets their words slip by.[4] The TIR sees that the true intention of the Lord is indeed to guide Israel, all Israel, to right covenantal relationship with him. He can see that all the Lord has done in cursing, in blessing, and even in his silence, has been to call Israel back to him (3:7c).

While the second and last blessing in Malachi could be considered a "pseudo" blessing, the fifth and last curse in the book can be seen as a "super" curse. In 3:24c-d the Lord announces to all Israel the possible outcome of their actions—total destruction—and Israel perceives the message. The term חרם is clearly understood by them since they have access to the Torah (3:22a). Nonetheless, as on previous occasions, they did not respond to the message.

The TIR is moved to see that this last curse statement is climactic in many respects. First, the choice of terms itself by the TIA reveals the escalation of intent. Curses could be reversed, as the Lord himself showed in his offers of blessing. But there is no coming back from a ban of destruction (חרם).

Second, the conditional nature of the offer, with total destruction as one of the options, shows that this conditional statement stands in opposition to the last conditional statement by the Lord. In other words, Israel could choose to obey the Lord and receive abundant blessings (3:10e-12b), or they could choose to disobey the Lord and be utterly destroyed (3:24c-d). The obeying of the Lord would also include receiving Elijah and his message of reconciliation.

3. See 3:10f, 3:12a.
4. This creates the possibility that Israel has on many occasions just let the words of the Lord slip by, especially in regard to blessings and curses. In their case, that action would indicate pride, as indeed they were guilty as charged.

Third, the Lord delivered this message of potential curse at a high communicational level. There is a progression in the curses of the Lord from the level of the characters to the level of the TIA.

Fourth, the reconciliation between fathers and sons (3:24a-b) could be seen as a kind of harvest, thus bringing the concern of the book about seed to a conclusion. The Lord had threatened to rebuke the seed of the priests (2:3a) in an effort to restore them to proper relationship. Given the blessing to protect harvests (3:11a-c) and assuming a reversal of the previous curse, the seed of the priests is usually identified as harvests. Nonetheless, the word זרע (seed) appears only a second time in the text, where it undoubtably refers to descendants (2:15c-d). Incidentally, the Lord complains there that people are not protecting his seed (זרע אלהים), thus apparently reckoning the descendants of Israel as his own seed. If the reconciliation between fathers and sons is seen as a harvest, this would fulfill both the curse of 2:3a to cut the seed, as both sons and fathers would be destroyed if there were no reconciliation, and the call of 2:15c-d to protect the seed, as children would live if reconciliation did take place.

This climactic call at the end of the book goes unanswered, as did all previous calls. Israel gives no answer. This becomes an invitation from the TIA to the TIR to accept the work and message of Elijah and prepare for the last day. The TIR has seen how the Lord has used blessing and cursing to call his people back to a right relationship with him and among themselves. Will he accept the call? His response, nonetheless, will extend beyond the text.

The following table serves to summarize the present discussion about the communicational use of blessings and curses in Malachi.

Reference	Declaration	Source	Target	Conditional	Level
1:14a-d	Curse	Malachi	Cheater	No	TIA
2:2e-h	Curse	Lord	Priests	No	Characters
2:12a-c	Curse	Malachi	Doers of abomination	No	TIA
3:9a-c	Curse	Lord	Israel	No	TIA
3:10e-12b	Blessing	Lord	Israel	Yes	Characters
3:15a-d	Pseudo Blessing	Fearers of the Lord	Insolent	No	Characters
3:24c-d	Curse	Lord	Israel	Yes	TIA

Figure 11 – Communicational use of blessings and curses in Malachi

Communicational Impact of Blessing and Cursing

The text does not reveal what impact blessing and cursing effect on cheaters, priests, doers of abomination, Israel, and the insolent. There is only silence recorded on their part. This, nonetheless, does not detract from the fact that the TIA uses them repeatedly in high-level communication, as well as communication at the level of the characters. This would in turn imply that blessing and cursing had high communicational value for the TIA and constituted an effective tool in his communicational arsenal. He uses blessing and cursing to drive important points in the argument and reserves a curse for his last call to Israel. In this section we will mention some concluding remarks in relation to the communicational impact of the use of blessings and curses in the text.

Blessings and curses do not appear in Malachi in the same proportion, as curses are more numerous. This is in no way unexpected as the two main lists of blessings and curses in the Hebrew Bible contain many more curses than blessings.[5]

Blessings and curses are issued by characters that are prominent in the communication. Only Malachi and the Lord utter curses. When Malachi curses, he does so as the prophetic voice in the text and not as a character on stage. When the Lord curses, he does both at the level of the TIA and at the level of the characters. Similarly, with the exception of the "pseudo blessing" of 3:15, only the Lord blesses. His blessing is at the level of the characters. The communicational force of both characters is high, since both Malachi and the Lord function, at least momentarily in the case of the Lord, at the communicative level of the TIA.

The order of blessings and curses in the text is: curses, potentially followed by a blessing, which is in turn potentially followed by complete destruction. This is not the usual pattern known to the TIR from the Hebrew Scriptures. The assumption of the Hebrew Scriptures is that after suffering curses Israel would eventually repent and thus be blessed again.[6] The use of blessings and curses in Malachi seems to break that patter and it is thus unprecedented. The TIA leaves open the possibility that Israel would not repent, and curses would then run their full course.

There is a development or a progression in the way that blessings and curses are used to manipulate characters and the TIR. Curses become progressively more severe and wider in their application. The Lord brings the theme to a climax with the threat of חרם, a ban of destruction, on the nation.

5. See for example, Leviticus 26:3-39 and Deuteronomy 28:1-68.
6. See for example, Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

The TIA takes the lead in cursing and the Lord follows that lead. Each curse from Malachi is followed by a curse from the Lord. But there are differences in the way Malachi and the Lord use curses. Malachi's curses are diffuse in their target, the cheater and the one who makes abomination. The Lord's curses are more specific, the priests and the whole nation of Israel. Malachi's curses are blunter communicatively, targeting the TIR directly. The Lord's curses are more personal, working from the level of the characters to finally addressing the TIR directly. Finally, Malachi's curses are undetermined as to their final objective. The Lord's curses have a clearly restorative intent.

Only the Lord truly blesses in the book of Malachi.[7] The Fearers of the Lord assume that the insolent is blessed by the Lord, but they do not take upon themselves the prerogative to bless. This is a simple but significant observation. In Deuteronomy, Moses blesses and curses. He is present in the text of Malachi, but he neither curses nor blesses there. In the text of Malachi, the prophetic voice and the Lord curse, but only the Lord blesses. Why has the prophetic voice lost the ability to bless in Malachi? Is it because he is a priest and his blessings were cursed? The TIA does not make this explicit. One thing is certain, by allowing only the Lord to bless the TIA highlights the uniqueness of the blessing in the eyes of the TIR. He has access to the rest of the Hebrew Bible and so he can see that this represents a break from other texts dealing with blessing, where some human authority figure, whether father, prophet, priest, or king would bless. The blessing of the Lord has the power to reverse and supersede any previous curse, whether by him or any other.

Blessings and curses are not the main issue of the book of Malachi. Also, contrary to common assumptions, cultic concerns are not the main issue of the book.[8] The main focus of the book is to lead Israel to a proper relationship with the Lord and among themselves. Even when dealing with a proper relationship with the Lord, ethical concerns are of paramount importance.

Blessings and curses are a communicational tool used by the TIA to manipulate Israel into a proper relationship with the Lord and among themselves.[9] Blessings and curses function in the book as a tool for religious regulation. More than that, they are a tool

7. I am not aware of any scholar highlighting this fact.
8. For example, Nogalski claims that "challenges to the way in which the cult is being run represents the most prominent theme in Malachi." Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 1003.
9. According to Haraguchi, "the yearning for divine blessings and the fear of curses are based on the traditional faith of the Israelites. The words of blessings and curses constitute an effective rhetoric, which appeals to the hearts of the Israelite audience." Takaaki Haraguchi, "Words of Blessing and Curse: A Rhetorical Study of Galatians," *The Asia Journal of Theology* 18 (2004): 33.

for social regulation, a tool to move characters and the TIR towards proper behavior. Blessings and curses are not meant to ultimately destroy or flatter, but, as a tool for social life, they are meant to move people towards proper, restored relationships, with the divine and with each other.

The TIA nowhere explains material from the Hebrew Scriptures but uses it to nuance the communicative force of blessing and cursing on the TIR. The TIR is designed to have knowledge of rules for proper sacrifices (1:14a-d), priestly service (2:2e-h), marriage (2:12a-c), tithes and freewill offerings (3:8a-e), covenantal blessings (3:10e-12b), and covenantal relationship between the Lord and Israel (3:24c-d). The TIR is apparently even designed to have knowledge of the exact wording of the Hebrew Scriptures. This would allow him to perceive the weight of specific allusions, such as the use of the term 2:2) המארה, 3:9a) in connection with the text of the Torah.[10] Without this background knowledge on the part of the TIR, the blessing and cursing in Malachi would be virtually meaningless. In other words, blessing and cursing would make no sense for the TIR apart from the Hebrew Scriptures.

The TIR plays a crucial role in the way blessings and curses work in Malachi. None of the characters react in the text to the curses or the blessing offered by Malachi and the Lord. The TIA expects the TIR to take action and respond positively and so avoid the curses and receive the blessing of the Lord. The TIR is also supposed to pity those who do wrong and join the character Lord in routing for them to accept his call and do right. This response on the part of the TIR extends beyond the boundaries of the text.

Having summed up the use and communicational implications of blessing and cursing in Malachi, we are now ready to draw general conclusions about our reader-oriented exploration of blessing and cursing in Malachi.

10. Texts can build upon previous texts, many times adapting and developing them to affect the TIR as desired by the TIA. For an exploration of how Biblical texts use other Biblical texts, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "Transformative Poetry: A General Introduction and Case Study of Psalm 2," *Perichoresis* 14 (2016): 3–20. For an exploration of how extra Biblical texts use Biblical texts, see, Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Concept of the City in the Book of Isaiah and in the Deuterocanonical Literature," in *The Early Reception of the Book of Isaiah* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 17–36.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

In this study entitled, "Blessing and Cursing in Malachi: A Reader-Oriented Approach," I set out to explore how the method of discourse analysis, focusing on the communication between the TIA and TIR, helps us understand the blessing and cursing present in the book of Malachi. I wanted to specially note how the TIA uses blessing and cursing as a tool to influence the TIR, and how that would affect the overall message of the book.

This study intended to test this reader-oriented methodology by applying it to the book of Malachi. In this way there would be a contribution to the development of the reader-oriented approach within discourse analysis while also contributing to the knowledge of the book of Malachi and the genre of blessing and cursing.

A Reader-Oriented Method of Discourse Analysis

The method used in this research consisted of three consecutive analyses, focusing on syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In the syntactic analysis I sought to discover the structure of the text by analyzing it clause by clause, connecting clauses using a binary system, and then using macro-syntactical signs and other syntactical markers to connect all clauses hierarchically. In the semantic analysis I noted the use of semantic techniques, ranging from those deemed more objective, such as word and root repetition, to those deemed more subjective, such as code switching. Semantic techniques were studied to reveal the semantic themes of the book. In the pragmatic analysis, I examined the communicational patterns at the level of the characters, as well as that at the level of the TIA and the TIR. I specially sought to discover how the TIA used blessing and cursing to impact the TIR. This concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of my research.

The syntactical analysis revealed the structure of the text of Malachi as made up by fifteen textual units. There is a heading (1:1a-b) and a conclusion formed by two units (3:22a-b and 3:23a-24d). The main body of the book is also divided into two sections (1:2a-2:17h and 3:1a-3:21d). The first half of the body of Malachi is composed of four units (1:2a-5c, 1:6a-2:9c, 2:10a-16f, 2:17a-h). The second half of Malachi is composed of eight units (3:1a-b, 3:1c-4a, 3:5a-d, 3:6a-d, 3:7a-12c, 3:13a-15d, 3:16a-18d, 3:19a-21d).

The semantic analysis revealed that there are six main thematic lines in the textual units of the book, namely: relationships, covenant, messenger, blessing and cursing, justice, and the day of the Lord. These issues are considered central because they appear both in the body and in the conclusion of the book. It is noteworthy that issues like love and hate, the greatness of the Lord, and liturgy are not central elements to

the semantic thrust of the book, as they are present only in a couple of units. Also worthy of attention, and significant for the present research, blessing and cursing are semantic elements that are used by the TIA as a unifying device for the different semantic lines.

The pragmatic analysis revealed that the heading of the book introduces not just the main characters in the text, the Lord, Israel, and Malachi, but also the communicative pattern that plays out in the rest of the book.

The character Lord is, as expected, omniscient and is presented as the originator of the communication. In the second half of the book, he is occasionally allowed to take on the role of the TIA. He, nonetheless, is not the TIA and is just a tool in the hand of the TIA.

The character Israel is present prominently at the beginning and at end of the book. He is not fully fleshed out in the body of the text and is approached through other characters such as Levi, Priests, Judah, and the Sons of Jacob.

The character Malachi is simultaneously present and absent in the text. On the one hand, Malachi controls all the communication and manipulates all other characters so that, for all practical purposes, he is indistinguishable from the TIA. This is so because there is a fusing between the TIA and the character Malachi, who functions as the prophetic voice in the text. On the other hand, the character is not developed as there is virtually no information about him.

The Lord does speak to Israel “by the hand of Malachi”, as the communication in the text of Malachi is characterized by “staged”, not real, dialogues. The characters Lord and Israel do not interact directly. Communication happens via the prophetic voice in the text, Malachi.

Communication in a text happens at the level of the characters, as well as at the level of the TIA and the TIR. But ultimately, all communication in a text, flows from the TIA towards the TIR. In the text of Malachi, initially the TIR is basically a discursive witness, as he sees the characters interact. But as the text unfolds his role evolves and the TIR moves to a more active role. He is addressed directly at some points, and at the conclusion of the book he is expected to act beyond the text, in response to the call of the Lord.

Both the prophetic voice and the charactered Lord issue curses and the Lord also offers a blessing for Israel. This reveals that for the TIA, cursing and blessing are very important communicative elements used to motivate sacrifice offerers, priests, unfaithful husbands, the people in general, and ultimately the TIR, towards proper behavior.

Blessing and Cursing in Malachi and Its Effect on the TIR

Semantic and pragmatic analyses revealed the prominent role that blessing and cursing play in the text of Malachi. Consequently, the last part of this research was an exploration of the communicational impact of blessing and cursing in Malachi.

Any issue placed at the sending or receiving ends of high-level communication in a text would be important. There are seven instances in Malachi where the TIA addresses the TIR directly: 1:1, 1:14, 2:7, 2:11-12, 3:1, 3:1-4, 3:16. In these passages, the only issue that appears more than once is that of cursing. Furthermore, the element of cursing is present not just at one, but at both ends of the high-level communication. In fact, the issue is present more than once at both ends.

Malachi utters two curses at the level of the TIA (1:14a-d, 2:12a-c). When he curses, he does so as the prophetic voice in the text and not as a character on stage. The Lord utters three curses, one at the level of the characters (2:2e-h) and two at the level of the TIA (3:9a-c, 3:24c-d). This reveals that cursing is a very important element of high-level communication in the text, and as such has a very high communicational importance for the TIA.

There is only one declaration of blessing in the text (3:10e-12b), besides one pseudo blessing in 3:15a-d, and it is given by the Lord at the level of the characters. Even though the blessing appears at the level of the characters, it is highly important communicatively, since it is given by the Lord, the central character in the text, and the only, besides Malachi, that is allowed to function briefly at the level of the TIA.

The analysis of blessing and cursing in Malachi produced several insights. I will briefly summarize them by way of a few comments. First, only entities who are prominent in the communication, i.e., the TIA/Malachi and the Lord, issue curses. Furthermore, only the Lord has the authority to bless in Malachi. This is a simple observation, but a significant one that would serve to highlight the uniqueness of the blessing in the eyes of the TIR. He has access to the rest of the Hebrew Bible and so he can see that this represents a break from other texts dealing with blessing where

some human authority figure would bless.[1] Moreover, this may also have a diachronic implication, as it may imply that the historical situation and/or the societal norms reflected in Malachi have changed compared to other passages where blessing appears.

There is a progression in the way that cursing is used to manipulate characters and the TIR. On the one hand, curses become more severe and wider in their target as the text unfolds. On the other hand, the TIA leaves open the possibility that Israel would not repent, and curses would then run their full course.

The TIA/Malachi takes the lead in cursing and the Lord follows that lead, whilst adding a redemptive intent. Each curse from Malachi is followed by a curse form the Lord. Malachi utters two unconditional curses, and so does the Lord. Nonetheless, the curses of the Lord are more focused and clarify his redemptive intent. Besides the unconditional curses, the Lord offers one conditional blessing (3:10e-12b) and one conditional curse (3:24c-d). These are ultimate in the sense that the blessing would undo all previous curses and the curse would undo all previous blessings. The TIA intends for the TIR to choose one of these alternatives.

The TIA designs the TIR to have knowledge of Hebrew traditions and the text of the Hebrew Scriptures. This knowledge is necessary for the TIR to understand and respond to the calls by the Lord. In this way, the TIR plays a crucial role in the way blessing and cursing work in Malachi. Since there is no indication in the text of any response on the part of Israel, it is up to the TIR to respond to the calls and invitations from the Lord. The actions of the TIR fall outside of the boundaries of the text.

As is usually noted in research dealing with Malachi, sacrificial and cultic elements are indeed present in the text, but they are not nearly as important as they are purported to be. Moreover, blessing and cursing are very important communicational tools used by the TIA to manipulate Israel, and therefore the TIR. Nonetheless, ultimately the focus of Malachi is not even blessing and cursing. Malachi is about ethical behavior in the social life, and the Torah is presented as the guide for this behavior. Cultic issues, blessing and cursing included, while frequently noted, are not the end but the means of Malachi. A loving connection to God and proper social life in the community are what Malachi pursues. This will be achieved as the TIR accepts the call to remember and follow the Torah of Moses, the servant of the Lord. Hopefully, real readers will also choose to do that, and in this way the message of Malachi becomes highly relevant for believers today.

1. The Fearers of the Lord issue a declaration which I term a “pseudo blessing”, since they do not use technical blessing vocabulary and the action does not entail any benefit to the recipient.

Testing the Reader-Oriented Methodology

Having summarized the findings about the communication in the text, how blessing and cursing function in the book of Malachi, and how these affect the TIR and the overall message of the book, now I want to address another purpose of this research: testing the reader-oriented methodology and contributing to the development of the reader-oriented approach within discourse analysis. How does this method compare to other methods? Has it produced satisfactory results? Are there any drawbacks?

I would suggest that the reader-oriented method stands out when compared to other methods because of two basic reasons: a bias towards the text and a systematic approach to analyzing the text.

A Bias Towards the Text

There are many ways to approach the task of interpreting texts. What many seem to overlook is that the method one chooses to approach the text in many ways predetermines the kind of results that will come out. Different methods can, and will, very often, lead to different conclusions.

Texts are studied because there are questions about them. Moreover, as texts are analyzed, new questions will inevitably arise and, as such, are always to be expected. Nonetheless, in this regard I consider there are two basic broad categories of methods: those that produce more questions than answers and those that produce more answers than questions. From a practical perspective, when the result of a method of research is to have "more questions than answers"[2] the researcher should seriously reconsider his choice of method as it does not seem to serve the main purpose, to answer questions. On the other hand, on the very issues where some scholars despair, others are able to find satisfactory solutions.[3]

I believe in most cases the difference lies in the attitude of the researcher to the text and, as a result, on the methods he chooses to study the text. The scholar who approaches the text respectfully, assuming that it was composed carefully and purposefully, will be willing to struggle with the text and look for solutions inside of the text. He will employ methods that are text-bound, and these methods will tend to provide more answers than questions. But the scholar who assumes the text is the result of an evolutionary development, usually involving a careless process of edition, will not be willing to wrestle with the text, but will be quick to look for solutions

2. Such is Snyman's conclusion in Snyman, "Malachi's Controversial Conclusion: Problems and Prospects," 133.
3. See for example Gibson's methods and his conclusions. Gibson, "Cutting Off 'Kith and Kin,' 'Er and Onan'? Interpreting an Obscure Phrase in Malachi 2:12," 536.

outside the text. He will prefer to use methods that rely on historical, textual, or other kinds of speculation to explain problematic texts. These methods will tend to produce more questions than answers, as new extra-textual variables are brought into the equation. The results of such methods will remain tentative by nature as they are impossible to prove or disprove in the absence of material evidence.

The present reader-oriented methodology is different from other methods because it actively seeks to avoid any extra textual bias, whether from diachronic speculation, such as hypothetical historical situations, historical reconstructions, hypothetical textual layers, textual emendations, or from ideological agendas, such as gender studies, psychological theories, emotional states, dogmatic/credal convictions, or any other. Those holding these biases already know what the text is about and just proceed to expound it from their previously held conviction.

This does not mean that the present method is held to be unbiased. Indeed, the reader-oriented method seeks to be unbiased towards any external influence but biased towards the text. This bias towards the text is warranted, since the text is the only tangible and factually verifiable artifact available to the researcher. Thus, the reader-oriented method seeks to approach the text from the only concrete reality about it, the text itself. There are occasions when the only viable solution is to amend the text in some way, but I consider those to be few and far between. Most of the perceived difficulties, whether textual or interpretative, are just invitations to look closer at the text to discover what the TIA is trying to convey to the TIR.

It is common for scholars to see slight elaborations of ideas previously presented in the text as later additions.[4] The repetition of a word or phrase and the use of common themes can also be seen as reason enough to posit a redactional theory.[5] Not on a few occasions one of the main reasons to postulate a redactional insertion, emendation, or reorganization of the text is because "it makes better sense."[6] Nonetheless, when the communication sent by the TIA does not make sense to the researcher, one must question, whose sense is to prevail? Moreover, there is no logical reason to see the repetition of words and even the repetition of phrases as evidence of redactional work. Many other explanations, more plausible and with more explanatory power, can be given. Only the verifiable existence of alternative texts or clear indications in the text to other sources should signal to the researcher that a redactional process is the best explanation to what is observed in a text.

4. See, Weyde, "Malachi in the Book of the Twelve," 262.
5. See, Redditt, "King, Priest, and Temple in Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi and Ezra-Nehemiah," 168. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," 127.
6. See, Snyman, "Malachi's Controversial Conclusion: Problems and Prospects," 126.

In the case of Malachi, there are many scholars who are quick to posit redactional hypotheses to deal with perceived difficulties in the text. For example, Schart identified four layers in the short book of Malachi.[7] Does such a short text clearly provide evidence of four independent sources? Perhaps. But the hypothesis is not supported by any existing manuscript evidence and will remain untestable unless other manuscripts are discovered. Similarly, Boda begins and ends an analysis touching on Malachi by assuming that a particular phrase constitutes an editorial superscription.[8] He discusses in detail what kind of editorial superscription it is and what the implications of its use are. But the initial assumption is never questioned. Is that phrase really an editorial superscription? What are the reasons to identify it as such? Are those good reasons? Grabbe asserts that Malachi is closely bound with Zechariah in its present structural arrangement, forming a "third oracle" after the two in Zech 9–14, mainly because of the repeated use of the word משׂא.[9] Can one word serve as the main argument to a redactional theory? Wielenga maintains that Malachi 3:22 is "best understood" as a deliberate editorial addition to the book it is attached to.[10] Is that really the "best" way to understand the passage? Are there valid alternatives? Even though there may be scholarly consensus and common assumptions about redactional theories, as Boda notes,[11] are consensus and assumptions enough of a foundation to base solid conclusions upon?

Even scholars that are usually very careful in their exploration of the text, occasionally venture into, quite specific, extra textual historical speculation. For example, Assis maintains that "Malachi contends here with the people's conviction that God has rejected Israel and they are no longer His chosen people, and that Edom has been chosen in their place."[12] The text does not seem to offer that much.

I do not wish to enter into polemic with other methods or the scholars practicing those methods, but the reality is that, as Blaylock maintains, "no clear, objective, agreed upon method exists for recognizing an editor's fingerprints."[13] Furthermore, there are no extant texts as those proposed in the theories, and very little is known about the historical context of many of the texts under consideration, as well as the chronological relations among them. In this way, diachronic methods need to rely on much textual and historical speculation on their quest to unravel the back-story and the previous

7. Schart, "Cult and Priests in Malachi 1:6–2:9," 223.
8. Boda, "Freeing the Burden of Prophecy," 338, 356.
9. Grabbe, "The Priesthood in the Persian Period: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 153.
10. Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript," 1.
11. Boda, "Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi," 113–14.
12. Assis, "Love, Hate and Self-Identity in Malachi," 111.
13. Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," 75.

editions of the text,[14] which are impossible to prove or disprove given the absence of hard historical or textual evidence.

Also against the overreliance on diachronic approaches, is the observation that many times the very textual units that historical-critical approaches have identified as additions, are demonstrated to be integral and even crucial elements of the text when examined using literary approaches.[15]

Given this situation, I suggest that the researcher should focus on understanding the text, many times the only artifact before him, rather than on its supposed development. It is on this line that the advice is given, "students of Malachi should focus their energies on understanding 3:1 as it stands instead of insisting on the presence of a mythical redactor."[16] No wonder that respect for the text and careful attention to it results in similar conclusions, my analysis and conclusions almost mirroring his. Compare this to the variety of conflicting conclusions when the goal of research is analyzing the back story and the development of a text instead of analyzing the text itself. In the reader-oriented approach the focus is the text as the analysis starts and ends with the text. Conclusions can readily be proven or disproven when compared to the text. In other methods, researchers employ a variety of techniques and assumptions, resulting in a variety of conclusions which ultimately cannot be proven or disproven given the absence of extant textual evidence.

The foregoing reflections do not necessarily mean that synchronic approaches are more important that diachronic ones, as "both questions are equally essential."[17] And even though one could argue that a text can be profitably studied without regard to diachronic elements, the historical question is an important one. But, as practiced in the reader-oriented approach, it should not be the first question. The text, as it stands, needs to be understood first.

Diachronic studies have their place, but should follow synchronic analyses. Only after the meaning of a text is uncovered, can the historical situation and the origin of such a text be deciphered. This can best be accomplished, not by positing theories that are impossible to prove or disprove, but by paying attention to the possibility conditions

14. See for example, Leuchter, "Another Look at the Hosea/Malachi Framework in The Twelve."
15. See, Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10."
16. Blaylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant: Malachi 3:1 Revisited," 76.
17. Van Wieringen, "A Tale of Two Worlds? A Synchronic Reading of Isaiah 7:1–17 and Its Diachronic Consequences for the Book," 181.

of the TIA and the TIR.[18] After the communicational situation of the text is established and its possibility conditions determined, the researcher can explore when in history such communication was possible and such conditions were present.

In the case of Malachi, the communicational situation in which only the Lord blesses may hint to a historical time different to that depicted in other books, such as Deuteronomy for example, when the prophetic voice was able to bless. Also, the possibility conditions, in which a Persian government title is used, intermarriage to foreigners is a religious issue, priests and people stand cursed, and complete destruction is a real possibility, point to a specific time in the history of the people of God. These elements serve to connect the world of the text to the real world of history.

Some other extra textual bias observed in recent approaches to Malachi include those dealing with the study of emotions, foreign worldviews, and theological presuppositions. Clendenen evidences that the study of emotions is useful and that authors do use different techniques to affect the emotions of their readers.[19] Nonetheless, the biblical scholar is completely unable to assess the effect of rhetorical techniques, including emotion evoking techniques, on real readers. A more nuanced approach could focus on the TIR and how the TIA manipulates its "emotions." The TIR will always "feel" the way the TIA designs it. This cannot be said of real readers. Hwang uses the concept of karma to explore what the Israelites may have understood about God and their dealings with him.[20] The use of extra textual concepts is not necessarily to be frowned upon, as all researchers approach the text from their own perspective and worldview, and looking at texts from different angles is bound to produce fresh insights. It should be clear nonetheless that although concepts foreign to the text may bring explanatory power, they may also bring foreign elements that may distract the researcher from issues in the text. Lastly, Wielenga may serve as an example of a very common theological bias. He understands blessing and cursing as present in the Pentateuch and assumes that they would work in the same way in Malachi.[21]

Together with Wielenga and many others, I also assumed that blessing and cursing would function in the same way as in Deuteronomy, from where they seem to originate. However, in a reader-oriented approach the text is allowed to reveal what blessing and cursing are about in the text being studied, and how they function

18. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 42; Van Wieringen, "A Tale of Two Worlds? A Synchronic Reading of Isaiah 7:1–17 and Its Diachronic Consequences for the Book," 190.
19. Clendenen, "A Passionate Prophet: Reading Emotions in the Book of Malachi," 208, 211, 214, 217.
20. Hwang, "Syncretism after the Exile and Malachi's Missional Response," 50.
21. Wielenga, "The God Who Hates," 3.

towards the TIR. I discovered, among other things, that blessing and cursing were less important than I expected them to be, based on my systematic theological assumptions, that they worked communicationally in a different way to what I expected, with Malachi not blessing, and that there is a possibility of not coming back from a state of being cursed, which is not the case in other texts.

It seems to me that the use of extra textual speculations, whether in the form of proposals for textual emendations, historical reconstructions, psychological explanations, theological presuppositions, or any other solutions stemming from outside the text are either evidence of an unwillingness to pay close attention to the text or the lack of a reliable method of interpretation. I do not doubt the sincerity and passion of the majority of biblical scholars in their desire to unravel the mysteries of the biblical text. So, I presume the limitation lies on the side of methods. This reader-oriented approach and its bias towards the text can serve as a useful tool and it hopefully constitutes a step forward in the development of methodologies to successfully mine the text of Scripture.

A Systematic Approach to Analyzing the Text

As long as researchers pay close attention to the text, many methods provide adequate results.[22] I believe the second characteristic that makes the reader-oriented method stand out when compared to other methods is that it charts a way to systematically assess different kinds of elements in a text, in a particular order, with the goal of producing as many fresh insights as possible. These insights, all firmly based on the text, are then combined to reveal the communication that the TIA intended to communicate to the TIR. This method is easily replicable and, since it is based on the hard facts of the text, it can be contested by others who also have access to the text.

In this section I will attempt to compare recent scholarship on the text of Malachi using a variety of methods and assumptions to the method used in this work and its assumptions. I will try to demonstrate how, in my opinion, a reader-oriented methodology brings clarity to the task of analyzing the text because of its systematic nature.

Boloje admits that many times it is difficult to determine precisely what the redactors and/or editors of texts want their readers to consider as most significant.[23] Indeed, without a way to distinguish syntactical, semantic, and communicational aspects it

22. See for example the excellent treatment of a hotly contested topic by Clendenen. He advances seven arguments, all slightly different methodologically, but all clearly based on the text. Clendenen, "'Messenger of the Covenant' in Malachi 3:1 Once Again."
23. Boloje, "Returning to Yahweh and Yahweh's Return: Aspects of שוּב in the Book of Malachi," 145.

becomes very confusing to see what is most relevant in a text. Moreover, it is difficult to assess in what ways and at what levels analogous items relate in the same text or in several texts. It is easy to perceive a root repetition in the same book and even across several books. But how is that repetition to be understood? Are the roots being used at similar syntactical levels? Are they used in narrative or discourse texts? Are they part of the textual background or foreground? Do they appear at the level of the TIA or at the level of the characters? How is the TIR meant to be affected by those words? How do all these elements come together to provide insights into the communicational situation in the text? Are the communicational situations similar in the different texts? A reader-oriented approach focusing sequentially on syntax, semantics, and pragmatics answers these questions and makes the study and comparison of texts more systematic and objective.

Sometimes the diachronic relation between texts is established or at least there are enough elements to establish them. In those cases, it is relatively easy to perceive how texts use other texts and how the meaning of later texts is impacted by earlier texts. For example, Koet analyses the figure of Elijah in different biblical texts, noting how later texts use and adapt earlier texts.[24] Lear also examines the relationship between texts and how these relationships help to understand the latter text.[25] These comparative studies are useful. But sometimes texts are very difficult to relate diachronically. In these cases, a communicational analysis could be a useful tool to compare texts.

For example, Rooke compares priests as presented in Joel and Malachi.[26] Without a syntactic analysis showing the structure of the text and the hierarchical relationship between the units conforming the text and without a communication analysis showing the communicational entities and the levels at which these entities communicate it is very difficult to make appropriate comparisons. One might end up contrasting a main argument in a prominent section by a main character or even the TIA to a passing comment in a supporting section by an obscure character. Without an appropriate method it is very difficult to ascertain whether one is comparing declarations or narrations of equal communicational weight.

The reader-oriented approach seeks to solve these issues by relying on the assumption that the TIA leaves clear textual markers that drive the way in which the text is to be

24. Koet, "Elijah as Reconciler of Father and Son: From 1 Kings 16:34 and Malachi 3:22-24 to Ben Sira 48:1-11 and Luke 1:13-17," 177.
25. Lear, "The Relationship of Scriptural Reuse to the Redaction of Malachi: Genesis 31-33 and Malachi 3.24," 5.
26. Rooke, "Priests and Profits."

understood by the TIR.[27] The method therefore forces the researcher to pay careful attention to syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic markers in order to discern the communication between the TIA and the TIR. In this way the method allows the researcher to systematically look at the text from different perspectives in a logical order.

Syntactic markers reveal the relation between words, the structure of the text, and what ideas are at the foreground of texts and which ideas form the background. The syntactical analysis and the insights derived from it should precede and provide the setting for semantic and pragmatic insights.[28] It is the syntactic analysis that reveals at what basic level things operate in the text.

One basic contribution of a syntactical analysis to the book of Malachi is to reveal the structure of the text based on macro-syntactic and other syntactical markers and not on thematic observations. Two recent examples would suffice as most scholars rely on semantic aspects for structuring the text. Snyman determined the structure of the text by noting the topics being discussed.[29] Wendland produced an impressive description of the structure of Malachi showing both linear and concentric patterns in the book.[30] His analysis is nonetheless also mostly based on thematic rather than macro-syntactic considerations. This means that, as he insightfully notes, such a study "may be misleading or simply wrong in a number of its conclusions since it fails to distinguish the forest (the overall structure and purpose of the discourse) on account of the trees (being bogged down in the disorganized detail of individual verses)."[31]

When applied to the text of Malachi the simple yet encompassing approach to the biblical Hebrew verbal system considering the elements of orientation, relief, and perspective eliminates uncertainties that other models allow. For example, using a different system of verbal interpretation, Goswell regards 1:11 and 1:14 as pertaining to the future, when the TIA clearly uses them as present realities that explain God's actions against priests and cheaters.[32]

Historical and/or redactional speculations can persuade the scholar to interpret a text in peculiar ways, sometimes even contrary to the way the TIA designed the TIR to understand it. For example, Nogalski sees the preposition לְ in 3:16e as indicating the

27. Ben Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," 286.
28. Van Wieringen, "Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader," 40.
29. Snyman, "To Take a Second Look at Malachi the Book," 3, 5.
30. Wendland, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, 360–78.
31. Wendland, 379.
32. Goswell, "The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14," 632, 634.

recipients of the "book of remembrance", a book "for" the fearers of the Lord. He also sees the conjunction ו in 3:18b as indicating the purpose why the book was written, "so that" they would see the difference between the righteous and the wicked.[33] Granted, both interpretations are possible. But in both cases the syntax of the text, as designed by the TIA, makes those readings unviable. In 3:16e the book is given ל fearers of the Lord and ל those who חשב (think/consider/value) his name. The double use of the preposition indicates that those who fear the Lord are those who think/consider/value his name. Thus, the book is not written "for" them so that they will remember the Lord, rather the book is written "about" them because they already remember him. Similarly, there are two ו conjunctions involved with the distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked. There is a conjunction heading 3:18a and another heading 3:18b. Both conjunctions are followed by *w^e^qatal* forms. The parallel syntactic construction demands that both cases be translated in the same way: "and you will return and you will see…" instead of, "so that you will return and so that you will see…" The conjunctions are not indicating the purpose but rather the consequence of the actions of the Lord. If the researcher approaches the text free from historical and/or redactional speculative biases he will be able to be guided by the syntactical features of the text.

Historical and/or redactional speculations can also lead the scholar to assume more than the text purports. For example, Nogalski takes the book or remembrance to be a reference to some form of the Book of the Twelve. He claims this based on the Twelve portraying examples of God's faithfulness and the allusions in Malachi to these texts.[34] If this criterion were systematically applied, the book of remembrance could also refer to Deuteronomy, Exodus, Proverbs, the Torah, etc. The researcher is making assumptions not based on the text but rather of his historical and/or redactional convictions.

A final example of the use of syntactic observations in the study of Malachi is regarding the formula אמר יהוה צבאות in 1:13 which is seen as proof of editorial work. It is claimed that the "formula is completely displaced and even inserted into the midst of a verbatim quotation of the opponents! … It is obvious that the formula was inserted at the wrong place secondarily."[35] Nonetheless, closer syntactical examination of the unit reveals that the "verbatim quotation" is an embedded speech and thus the formula makes perfect sense as it is. In fact, it is common practice in Malachi to insert the formula midway an argument or declaration of the Lord.[36]

33. Nogalski, "How Does Malachi's 'Book of Remembrance' Function for the Cultic Elite?," 192.
34. Nogalski, 197–98.
35. Schart, "Cult and Priests in Malachi 1:6–2:9," 215.
36. See for example, 1:6g, 1:10e, 2:2d.

Semantic markers reveal the meaning of words, in their own context and not from outside of the text. Semantic techniques reveal the basic issues in the text. Most scholars instinctively use semantic considerations to establish intratextual and intertextual connections. Unfortunately, many also use these considerations apart from syntactic ones.

For example, some scholars make comparisons between Malachi and other Bible books based, apparently, simply on the use of a common theme or subject matter.[37] I do believe texts ought to be compared to each other, but there should be more than a common general theme to warrant that. Allusions should be identified based on semantic, syntactical, and, ideally, communicational parallels. The same lexeme, or at least a recognized synonym or word pair, should be used in both texts. Furthermore, the textual connection would be stronger if the same syntactical construction is used. The last element to compare would be the communicational situation. If there are semantic, syntactical, and communicational parallels between two texts that would prove to be a very clear allusion.

A specific example of the (mis)use of semantics in Malachi involves the interpretation of the phrase "come to his temple" to indicate that the messenger of the covenant is a priest.[38] Certainly, the word temple and the word priests are part of the same semantic field. This would even concur with 2:7 where a priest is identified as a messenger of the Lord. Nonetheless, this identification does not fit the designation as "lord" of the one who comes to the temple. An analysis of the word in Malachi reveals that it always points to YHWH. Furthermore, the syntax of the text indicates that the lord parallels the messenger of the covenant, and this messenger is therefore not to be seen primarily as a priestly figure but rather as a divine or God-related character.

Close attention to semantics allows Assis to affirm the integrity of the conclusion of Malachi and its very close connection to the previous text.[39] But semantics alone are not able to provide a detailed enough picture of a text. By looking at semantics alone, in this case the repeated use of the word מלך, but disregarding syntactical and pragmatic aspects, he conflates the messenger of 3:1a with the messenger of the covenant of 3:1e. This confuses his analysis and conclusions.[40]

37. See for example, Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript."
38. Weyde, "Malachi in the Book of the Twelve," 261.
39. Assis, "Moses, Elijah and the Messianic Hope. A New Reading of Malachi 3:22-24," 209.
40. Assis, 215.

Pragmatic markers reveal the speakers and addresses of texts and at what level the communication is happening, whether at the level of the character or the level of the TIA. These insights are used to discover the communication in the text towards to the TIR, in other words, how the TIR is affected by what the TIA reveals in the text. Furthermore, a text can be read, understood, used, and reinterpreted in different ways by real readers in different contexts.[41] Moreover, each real reader is unique and outside of reach for the biblical scholar. These insights suggest that focusing on the communication between the TIA and the TIR would allow the scholar to give attention to what is real, the text, and what he has access to, the author and reader in the text.

A positive example in this regard is Assis, representing a recent example of a scholar highlighting the importance of pragmatic aspects to understand the message of Malachi. He alerts his readers to the importance of properly identifying the speaker to understand a declaration in texts.[42] I give for granted that he also sees the importance of properly identifying the addresses in a text.

Boloje represents a recent example of a scholar whose work would benefit from the clarity that pragmatic insights bring. When analyzing 3:13-18 he initially claims that the text presents "two groups that stand out in the passage: the proud complainers (3:13–15) and the believing Yahweh fearers (3:16–18).[43] Nonetheless, later in his study he maintains that those who walk mournfully (3:14) are the fearers of the Lord.[44] A pragmatic study reveals that his later assertion is correct. There are not two groups in the text. The second plural that is eventually revealed as being the fearers of the Lord is the same second plural that had previously complained before the Lord. They are not proud, but rather fearful complainers.

The foregoing discussion has made clear that many scholars have recently applied syntactic, semantic, and/or pragmatic methods and insights to expound the text of Malachi. The contribution of the reader-oriented approach nonetheless is that it entails the systematic use of all these approaches in succession. First, the syntactical analysis reveals the basic structure or outline of the text, then, the semantic analysis reveals what is the content of the text, finally, the pragmatic analysis reveals how the TIA uses syntactic and semantic clues to impact the TIR. The strength of the reader-oriented approach resides in the combined and sequential use of complementary methods of textual analysis. As

41. Ben Ben Zvi, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us?," 281.
42. Assis, "Love, Hate and Self-Identity in Malachi," 115. Regrettably, in the text under consideration he proceeds to misidentify the speaker.
43. Boloje and Groenewald, "Antithesis between יִרְאֵי יְהוָה and רְשָׁעִים: Malachi 3:13–21 [MT] as a Reconciliation of Yahweh's Justice with Life's Inequalities," 3.
44. Boloje and Groenewald, 6.

mentioned before, difficulties in the text should be seen as invitations to pay closer attention to the signals in the text before looking for answers outside of the text.

I will give two final examples to illustrate how the strength of the reader-oriented approach resides in the combined and sequential use of complementary methods of textual analysis. Using lexical and rhetorical analysis Petterson concludes that the messenger (3:1a) and the messenger of the covenant (3:1e) represent the same entity.[45] Here is where a multifaceted approach brings clarity. Syntactically, the lord and the messenger of the covenant are paralleled, indicating that while not necessarily identical, they are similar in some way. Furthermore, the conclusion of the textual unit announces that he, singular, comes. Thus, the syntax indicates that we are dealing with one entity, the lord, who is the messenger of the covenant. Semantically, the term lord always refers to YHWH in Malachi. Pragmatically, the lord and messenger of the covenant is revealed as the one who purifies the Levites so they can offer sacrifices to YHWH. So, the lord and messenger of the covenant is not the human, possibly priestly, messenger of 3:1a, but he is presented as somehow equal to YHWH although also different from YHWH. This clarity only comes from the cumulative evidence brought forth through different approaches.

Similarly, Boloje sees the work of the eschatological covenant messenger as entailing purification (3:2-4) and judgement (3:5).[46] Nonetheless, the syntactic analysis reveals that these are separate textual units, and the pragmatic analysis reveals that the first singular, the Lord, who announces his own coming (3:5) is present as a third person in 3:2-4. Additionally, the lord and messenger of the covenant, purifies the Levites so that they can present pure offering to the Lord. Thus, the lord and messenger of the covenant purifies, while the Lord judges. Granted, I interpret the lord and messenger of the covenant as both equal to YHWH and separate from YHWH and so Boloje would ultimately be correct. But there is much left unsaid in his discussion. Again, this clarity only comes from the cumulative evidence brought forth through different approaches.

Opinion

So, has the reader-oriented approach proved useful in analyzing a prophetic text? I would say, yes. In the case of Malachi, the method has proven sufficient for fruitful analysis. All of the texts usually labeled as editorial editions or as problematic have been, in my opinion, adequately accounted for and explained by the successive steps of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analysis.

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45. Petterson, "The Identity of 'The Messenger of the Covenant' in Malachi 3," 277–93.
46. Boloje, "Returning to Yahweh and Yahweh's Return: Aspects of שוב in the Book of Malachi," 155–56.

The reader-oriented approach focusing on the communication between TIA and TIR, has also proven effective in yielding new insights into the text. For example, the realization that the TIA gives access to the TIR to the words of the Lord, by having the prophetic voice report them in 2:16 serves to solve a hermeneutical conundrum that has baffled interpreters for centuries. Similarly, the realization that there are different speakers in 3:1ab and 3:1c-h and that it is the prophetic voice who speaks in 3:1g brings clarity to the identity and function of the entities mentioned in 3:1a-h. This has also been a hotly contested topic in the book.

Are there any drawbacks to the method? I would say two perhaps. First, since the method looks at the same text from different perspectives it is time consuming. The syntactic analysis, which is in many ways the foundation of the method, is particularly time consuming. Second, since the method looks at the same text from different perspectives it can feel repetitive. I consider, nonetheless, that these drawbacks are a small price to pay for the abundance of insights gathered and the clarity that the method brings when analyzing a text.

Further research

Since the reader-oriented approach has proven fruitful for the analysis of the text of Malachi and since modern scholarship has taken a renewed interest in studying the Book of the Twelve as a unit, it would be interesting to apply a similar reader-oriented approach to the study of individual books in the collection or even to the collection itself. The results should prove illuminating for the understanding of the individual books and for the collection as a whole.

Boda, for example, has recognized the presence of blessing and cursing in Haggai 2, Zechariah 3, and Malachi 1-2.[47] A communicational study could objectively compare all the passages and discern how are blessing and cursing used in each passage and whether there are any similarities or differences and what those would signify. The application of a reader-oriented approach should also prove useful when applied to Deuteronomy or other texts which feature blessing and cursing.

Other methods could also profitably follow the present reader-oriented study to the text of Malachi. Diachronic studies could endeavor to determine the historical period and the societal situations that would match the communication described in the text as well as the possibility conditions revealed by the TIA. Pastoral theology or sociological studies could explore how the communicational dynamics in the text could

47. Boda, “Perspectives on Priests in Haggai-Malachi,” 31.

affect marriages, immigrants, clergy, and others today.[48] Systematic theology studies could explore the character of God, divine judgement, election and other topics.[49]

Analysis of biblical texts should ultimately result in ethical guidance for faith communities. As blessing and cursing proved an effective way to encourage correct living in regard to God and community, the reading of Malachi and the text of Scripture in general should result in ethical living for believers today.[50]

48. See for example, Boloje and Groenewald, "Marriage and Divorce in Malachi 2," 8.
49. See for example, Wielenga, "The God Who Hates," 7.
50. Groenewald and Boloje, "Prophetic Criticism of Temple Rituals: A Reflection on Malachi's Idea about Yahweh and Ethics for Faith Communities," 12–13, 15.

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APPENDIX

1:1a מַשָּׂא
A message
1:1b דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכִי
The word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of Malachi

אָהַבְתִּי
I have loved
1:2a אֶתְכֶם
you
1:2b אָמַר יְהוָה
The Lord said
1:2c וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
בַּמָּה
How
1:2d אֲהַבְתָּנוּ
have you loved us?

הֲלוֹא־אָח
Was not a brother
1:2e עֵשָׂו לְיַעֲקֹב
Esau to Jacob?
1:2f נְאֻם־יְהוָה
[This is] the utterance of the Lord

1:2g וָאֹהַב אֶת־יַעֲקֹב
But I loved Jacob
1:3a וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי
and Esau I hated
1:3b וָאָשִׂים אֶת־הָרָיו שְׁמָמָה
And I set his mountains to be a devastation
1:3c וְאֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְבָּר
and his inheritance for the jackals of the desert

1:4a כִּי־תֹאמַר אֱדוֹם
For Edom may say
1:4b רֻשַּׁשְׁנוּ
We have been shattered
1:4c וְנָשׁוּב
but want to return
1:4d וְנִבְנֶה חֳרָבוֹת
and rebuild the ruins
1:4e כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
Thus the Lord of hosts said
1:4f הֵמָּה יִבְנוּ
They may build
1:4g וַאֲנִי אֶהֱרוֹס
but then I will tear down
1:4h וְקָרְאוּ לָהֶם גְּבוּל רִשְׁעָה וְהָעָם

And they will be called the territory of wickedness and the people
1:4i אֲשֶׁר־זָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם
against whom the Lord is indignant for ever
1:5a וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּרְאֶינָה
And your eyes may see
1:5b וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ
and you may say
יִגְדַּל יְהוָה
The Lord is great
1:5c מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
beyond the border of Israel
1:6a בֵּן יְכַבֵּד אָב
A son honors a father
1:6b וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו
and a servant his lord
1:6c וְאִם־אָב אָנִי
Now if I am a father
1:6d אַיֵּה כְבוֹדִי
where is the honor due to me?
1:6e וְאִם־אֲדוֹנִים אָנִי
and if I am a lord
1:6f אַיֵּה מוֹרָאִי
where is the fear due to me?
1:6g אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם
The Lord of hosts said to you
1:6h הַכֹּהֲנִים
priests
1:6i בּוֹזֵי שְׁמִי
who are despising my name
1:6j וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
בַּמֶּה בָזִינוּ
In what have we despised
1:6k אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ
your name?
1:7a מַגִּישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל
Placing upon my altar defiled bread
1:7b וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
בַּמֶּה
How
1:7c גֵּאַלְנוּךָ
have we defiled you?
1:7d בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם
By your saying
שֻׁלְחַן יְהוָה הוּא

A

The table of the Lord
נִבְזֶה הוּא 1:7e
is despicable

וְכִי־תַגִּישׁוּן עִוֵּר לִזְבֹּחַ 1:8a
And when you offer blind [animals] for sacrifice
אֵין רָע 1:8b
is it not evil?

וְכִי תַגִּישׁוּ פִּסֵּחַ וְחֹלֶה 1:8c
And when you offer lame and sick [animals]
אֵין רָע 1:8d
is it not evil?

הַקְרִיבֵהוּ נָא לְפֶחָתֶךָ 1:8e
Bring it to your governor!
הֲיִרְצְךָ 1:8f
would he be pleased with you
אוֹ הֲיִשָּׂא פָנֶיךָ 1:8g
or would he lift your face?

אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:8h
The Lord of hosts said

וְעַתָּה חַלּוּ־נָא פְּנֵי־אֵל 1:9a
And now, seek the face of God!
וִיחָנֵנוּ 1:9b
that he may be gracious to us

מִיֶּדְכֶם הָיְתָה זֹאת 1:9c
This was from your hand
הֲיִשָּׂא מִכֶּם פָּנִים 1:9d
would he lift your faces?

אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:9e
The Lord of hosts said

מִי גַם־בָּכֶם 1:10a
Who among you
וְיִסְגֹּר דְּלָתַיִם 1:10b
would close the doors
וְלֹא־תָאִירוּ מִזְבְּחִי חִנָּם 1:10c
so that you would not kindle my altar for nothing?

אֵין־לִי
I am not
חֵפֶץ בָּכֶם 1:10d
delighted with you
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:10e
The Lord of hosts said

וּמִנְחָה לֹא־אֶרְצֶה 1:10f
And I am not pleased with the gift
מִיֶּדְכֶם 1:10g
from your hand

כִּי מִמִּזְרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְעַד־מְבוֹאוֹ גָּדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם 1:11a

Because from the rising of the sun to its setting great is my
name among the nations
וּבְכָל־מָקוֹם מֻקְטָר מֻגָּשׁ לִשְׁמִי 1:11b
and in every place incense is being offered to my name
וּמִנְחָה טְהוֹרָה 1:11c
and clean gift
כִּי־גָדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם 1:11d
because great is my name among the nations
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:11e
The Lord of hosts said

וְאַתֶּם מְחַלְּלִים אוֹתוֹ 1:12a
And you are profaning it
בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם 1:12b
by your saying
שֻׁלְחַן אֲדֹנָי מְגֹאָל הוּא 1:12c
The table of the Lord is defiled
וְנִיבוֹ נִבְזֶה אָכְלוֹ 1:12d
and its fruit is despised food

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם 1:13a
And you said
הִנֵּה
Ah,
מַתְּלָאָה 1:13b
what a hardship!
וְהִפַּחְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ 1:13c
and you have sniffed at it
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:13d
The Lord of hosts said

וַהֲבֵאתֶם גָּזוּל וְאֶת־הַפִּסֵּחַ וְאֶת־הַחוֹלֶה 1:13e
and you brought stolen even
the lame [animal] and the sick [animal]
וַהֲבֵאתֶם אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה 1:13f
and you brought the offering
הַאֶרְצֶה אוֹתָהּ מִיֶּדְכֶם 1:13g
Would I be please with it from your hand?
אָמַר יְהוָה 1:13h
The Lord said

וְאָרוּר נוֹכֵל 1:14a
So, cursed is the cheater
וְיֵשׁ בְּעֶדְרוֹ זָכָר 1:14b
that having in his flock a male [animal]
וְנֹדֵר 1:14c
makes a vow
וְזֹבֵחַ מָשְׁחָת לַאדֹנָי 1:14d
but sacrifices a corrupted animal to the Lord

כִּי

A

Because
מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי 1:14e
I am a great king
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 1:14f
The Lord of hosts said
וּשְׁמִי
and my name
נוֹרָא בַגּוֹיִם 1:14g
is feared among the nations
וְעַתָּה אֲלֵיכֶם הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת 2:1a
And now, this commandment is for you
הַכֹּהֲנִים 2:1b
priests
אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ 2:2a
if you would not hear
וְאִם־לֹא תָשִׂימוּ עַל־לֵב 2:2b
and if you would not put it to heart
לָתֵת כָּבוֹד לִשְׁמִי 2:2c
to give glory to my name
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 2:2d
The Lord of hosts said
וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם אֶת־הַמְּאֵרָה 2:2e
then I will send to you the curse
וַאֲרוֹתִי אֶת־בִּרְכוֹתֵיכֶם 2:2f
and I will curse your blessings
וְגַם אָרוֹתִיהָ 2:2g
and indeed I have cursed
כִּי אֵינְכֶם שָׂמִים עַל־לֵב 2:2h
because you have not put it to heart
הִנְנִי גֹעֵר לָכֶם אֶת־הַזֶּרַע 2:3a
I am about to rebuke because of you the seed
וְזָרִיתִי פֶרֶשׁ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם פֶּרֶשׁ חַגֵּיכֶם 2:3b
and I will scatter feces on your faces, the feces of your feasts
וְנָשָׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו 2:3c
and he will carry you to it
וִידַעְתֶּם 2:4a
and you will know
כִּי שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם אֵת הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת 2:4b
that I sent you this commandment
לִהְיוֹת בְּרִיתִי אֶת־לֵוִי 2:4c
to maintain my covenant with Levi
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 2:4d
The Lord of hosts said
בְּרִיתִי הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ הַחַיִּים וְהַשָּׁלוֹם 2:5a
My covenant with him was the life and the peace
וָאֶתְּנֵם־לוֹ מוֹרָא 2:5b

and I gave them to him as fear
2:5c וַיִּרְאֵנִי
and he feared me
2:5d וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נִחַת הוּא
and before my name he was dismayed

2:6a תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הָיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ
The teaching of truth was in his mouth
2:6b וְעַוְלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בִשְׂפָתָיו
and injustice was not found in his lips
2:6c בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי
in peace and in uprightness he walked with me
2:6d וְרַבִּים הֵשִׁיב מֵעָוֹן
and many he caused to turn from iniquity

2:7a כִּי־שִׂפְתֵי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ־דַעַת
because the lips of a priest should keep knowledge
2:7b וְתוֹרָה יְבַקְּשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ
and teaching people should seek from his mouth
2:7c כִּי מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה־צְבָאוֹת הוּא
because the messenger of the Lord of hosts is he

2:8a וְאַתֶּם סַרְתֶּם מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ
but you yourselves have departed from the way
2:8b הִכְשַׁלְתֶּם רַבִּים בַּתּוֹרָה
you make many to fall by the teaching
2:8c שִׁחַתֶּם בְּרִית הַלֵּוִי
you ruined the covenant of Levi
2:8d אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
The Lord of hosts said

2:9a וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי אֶתְכֶם נִבְזִים וּשְׁפָלִים לְכָל־הָעָם
So I myself have given you to be despised and held in low stem by all the people
2:9b כְּפִי אֲשֶׁר אֵינְכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת־דְּרָכַי
because you are not keeping my ways
2:9c וְנֹשְׂאִים פָּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה
and you are lifting faces in the teaching

2:10a הֲלוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלָּנוּ
Do not we all have one father?
2:10b הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאָנוּ
did not one God create us?
2:10c מַדּוּעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו
why do we act treacherously each man to his brother
2:10d לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ
to pollute the covenant of our fathers?

2:11a בָּגְדָה יְהוּדָה
Judah has acted treacherously
2:11b וְתוֹעֵבָה נֶעֱשְׂתָה בְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלִָם
and abomination has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem

A

כִּי חִלֵּל יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה 2:11c
Because Judah has polluted the holiness of the Lord
אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב 2:11d
whom he loves
וּבָעַל בַּת־אֵל נֵכָר 2:11e
and has married the daughter of a foreign god

יַכְרֵת יְהוָה לָאִישׁ 2:12a
May the Lord cut the man
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂנָּה עֵר וְעֹנֶה מֵאָהֳלֵי יַעֲקֹב 2:12b
who makes her "protector and protected" from the tents of Jacob
וּמַגִּישׁ מִנְחָה לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת 2:12c
and meanwhile offers a gift to the Lord of hosts

וְזֹאת שֵׁנִית תַּעֲשׂוּ 2:13a
And this second thing you do:

כַּסּוֹת דִּמְעָה אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה בְּכִי וַאֲנָקָה 2:13b
Covering with tears the altar of the Lord, with weeping and crying
מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה 2:13c
because there is still not acceptance of the gift
וְלָקַחַת רָצוֹן מִיֶּדְכֶם 2:13d
and to accept the favor form your hands

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם 2:14a
And you said
עַל־מָה 2:14b
Why

עַל כִּי־יְהוָה הֵעִיד בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין אֵשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ 2:14c
Because the Lord has testified between you and the wife of your youth
אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּגַדְתָּה בָּהּ 2:14d
against whom you have acted treacherously
וְהִיא חֲבֶרְתְּךָ וְאֵשֶׁת בְּרִיתֶךָ 2:14e
and she is your partner and the wife of your covenant

וְלֹא־אֶחָד עָשָׂה 2:15a
but one he did not make [them – the man and the daughter of a foreign god]
וּשְׁאָר רוּחַ לוֹ 2:15b
and there is no remnant of spirit to it [the unit of man and woman]

וּמָה הָאֶחָד 2:15c
and who is the one
מְבַקֵּשׁ זֶרַע אֱלֹהִים 2:15d
seeking the seed of God?

וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם 2:15e
you will keep your spirit

וּבְאֵשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ אַל־יִבְגֹּד 2:15f
and you should not act treacherously
with the wife of your youth

כִּי־שָׂנֵא

Because he hates
שַׂנֵּא 2:16a
divorce
אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 2:16b
The Lord God of Israel said
וְכִסָּה חָמָס
and you should not cover violence
עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ 2:16c
upon your garment
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 2:16d
The Lord of hosts said
וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם 2:16e
You will keep your spirit
וְלֹא תִבְגֹּדוּ 2:16f
and you should not act treacherously
הוֹגַעְתֶּם יְהוָה בְּדִבְרֵיכֶם 2:17a
You have wearied the Lord with your words
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם 2:17b
And you said
בַּמָּה
How
הוֹגָעְנוּ 2:17c
did we make weary?
בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם 2:17d
By your saying
כָּל־ 2:17eα
Everyone
עֹשֵׂה רָע 2:17f
who is doing evil
טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה 2:17eβ
is good in the eyes of the Lord
וּבָהֶם הוּא חָפֵץ 2:17g
and in them he has delighted
אוֹ אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט 2:17h
or where is the God of justice?
הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכִי 3:1a
I am about to send my messenger
וּפִנָּה־דֶרֶךְ לְפָנָי 3:1b
and he will prepare the way before me
וּפִתְאֹם יָבוֹא אֶל־הֵיכָלוֹ הָאָדוֹן 3:1c
And suddenly he goes into his temple, the lord
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְּשִׁים 3:1d
whom you long for
וּמַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית 3:1e
and the messenger of the covenant
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֲפֵצִים 3:1f

A

in whom you delight
הִנֵּה־בָא 3:1g
Yes! He is going
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 3:1h
The Lord of hosts said
וּמִי מְכַלְכֵּל אֶת־יוֹם בּוֹאוֹ 3:2a
But who endures the day of his coming?
וּמִי הָעֹמֵד בְּהֵרָאוֹתוֹ 3:2b
and who stands in his appearing?
כִּי־הוּא כְּאֵשׁ מְצָרֵף וּכְבֹרִית מְכַבְּסִים 3:2c
because he is like fire of a refiner and like soap of washers
וְיָשַׁב מְצָרֵף 3:3a
and he will sit as a refiner
וּמְטַהֵר כֶּסֶף 3:3b
and as a purifier of silver
וְטִהַר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי 3:3c
and he will purify the house of Levi
וְזִקַּק אֹתָם כַּזָּהָב וְכַכָּסֶף 3:3d
and he will refine them like gold and like silver
וְהָיוּ לַיהוָה 3:3e
and the Lord will have those
מַגִּישֵׁי מִנְחָה בִּצְדָקָה 3:3f
who bring gifts in righteousness
וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלִָם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קַדְמֹנִיּוֹת 3:4a
And the gift of Judah and Jerusalem will be sweet to the Lord
as in the days of old and like in former years
וְקָרַבְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם לַמִּשְׁפָּט 3:5a
And I will come to you for judgment
וְהָיִיתִי עֵד מְמַהֵר בַּמְכַשְּׁפִים וּבַמְנָאֲפִים וּבַנִּשְׁבָּעִים לַשָּׁקֶר וּבְעֹשְׁקֵי שְׂכַר־שָׂכִיר אַלְמָנָה וְיָתוֹם וּמַטֵּי־גֵר 3:5b
and I will be a quick witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against the false witnesses, against those who oppress the hired worker, the widow and orphan, against those who bend justice against the foreigner
וְלֹא יְרֵאוּנִי 3:5c
[those who] do not fear me
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 3:5d
The Lord of hosts said
כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁנִיתִי 3:6a
Since I, the Lord, have not changed
וְאַתֶּם 3:6b
so you
בְּנֵי־יַעֲקֹב 3:6c
sons of Jacob
לֹא כְלִיתֶם 3:6d
Have not been destroyed

3:7a לְמִימֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם סַרְתֶּם מֵחֻקַּי
Since the days of your fathers you have departed from my statutes
3:7b וְלֹא שְׁמַרְתֶּם
and have not kept them
3:7c שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי
Return to me!
3:7d וְאָשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם
that I may return to you
3:7e אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
the Lord of hosts said
3:7f וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
בַּמֶּה
How
3:7g נָשׁוּב
should we return?
3:8a הֲיִקְבַּע אָדָם אֱלֹהִים
Should a man rob God
3:8b כִּי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים אֹתִי
because you are robbing me
3:8c וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
בַּמֶּה
How
3:8d קָבַעְנוּךָ
have we robbed you?
הַמַּעֲשֵׂר
the tithe
3:8e וְהַתְּרוּמָה
and the offering
3:9a בַּמְּאֵרָה אַתֶּם נֹאָרִים
with *the* curse you [yourselves] are being cursed
3:9b וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים
because you [yourselves] are robbing me
3:9c הַגּוֹי כֻּלּוֹ
the whole nation
3:10a הָבִיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֵׂר אֶל־בֵּית הָאוֹצָר
Bring in the whole tithe to the house of the treasure!
3:10b וִיהִי טֶרֶף בְּבֵיתִי
that there may be food in my house
וּבְחָנוּנִי נָא
And test me
3:10c בָּזֹאת
in this!
3:10d אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

A

the Lord of hosts said
3:10e אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֵת אֲרֻבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם
I will certainly open for you the windows of the heavens
3:10f וַהֲרִיקֹתִי לָכֶם בְּרָכָה עַד־בְּלִי־דָי
and empty out for you a blessing in abundance
3:11a וְגָעַרְתִּי לָכֶם בָּאֹכֵל
And I will rebuke the eater because of you
3:11b וְלֹא־יַשְׁחִת לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה
so that the fruit of your land would not spoil
3:11c וְלֹא־תְשַׁכֵּל לָכֶם הַגֶּפֶן בַּשָּׂדֶה
so that the vine in your field would not be unfruitful
3:11d אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
The Lord of hosts said
3:12a וְאִשְּׁרוּ אֶתְכֶם כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
And all the nations will call you blessed
3:12b כִּי־תִהְיוּ אַתֶּם אֶרֶץ חֵפֶץ
for you yourselves would become a land of delight
3:12c אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
The Lord of hosts said
חָזְקוּ עָלַי
Your words against me
3:13a דִּבְרֵיכֶם
have been strong
3:13b אָמַר יְהוָה
said the Lord
3:13c וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
And you said
מַה־נִּדְבַּרְנוּ
What have we spoken
3:13d עָלֶיךָ
against you?
3:14a אֲמַרְתֶּם
You said
3:14b שָׁוְא עֲבֹד אֱלֹהִים
It is useless to serve God
3:14c וּמַה־בֶּצַע
and what is the profit
3:14d כִּי שָׁמַרְנוּ מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ
for having kept his charge
3:14e וְכִי הָלַכְנוּ קֹדֹרְנִית מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
and for having walked mourningly before the Lord of hosts?
3:15a וְעַתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ מְאַשְּׁרִים זֵדִים
And now we call blessed the insolent
3:15b גַּם־נִבְנוּ עֹשֵׂי רִשְׁעָה
indeed, the doers of wickedness were build up!
3:15c גַּם בָּחֲנוּ אֱלֹהִים

indeed, they tested God!
3:15d וַיִּמָּלֵטוּ
and they escaped

3:16a אָז נִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה
At that time the fearers of the Lord spoke [among themselves]
3:16b אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ
each man to his friend

3:16c וַיַּקְשֵׁב יְהוָה
and the Lord paid attention
3:16d וַיִּשְׁמָע
and he heard
3:16e וַיִּכָּתֵב סֵפֶר זִכָּרוֹן לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאֵי יְהוָה וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ
and a book of remembrance was written before him about the fearers of the Lord and about those who remember his name

וְהָיוּ
And they will be
3:17a לִי
for me
3:17b אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
the Lord of hosts said

3:17c לַיּוֹם
on the day
3:17d אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה
which I am making
3:17e סְגֻלָּה
a special possession

3:17f וְחָמַלְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם
And I will spare them
3:17g כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחְמֹל אִישׁ עַל בְּנוֹ
like a man would spare his son
3:17h הָעֹבֵד אֹתוֹ
who serves him

3:18a וְשַׁבְתֶּם
And you will return
3:18b וּרְאִיתֶם בֵּין צַדִּיק לְרָשָׁע
and you will see [the difference] between the righteous and the wicked
3:18c בֵּין עֹבֵד אֱלֹהִים
between he who is serving God
3:18d לַאֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבָדוֹ
And he who did not serve him

3:19a כִּי־הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם בָּא
For the day is almost to come
3:19b בֹּעֵר כַּתַּנּוּר
burning like the oven!

וְהָיוּ כָל־זֵדִים וְכָל־
and all the insolents

A

עֹשֵׂה רִשְׁעָה קַשׁ 3:19c
and all who do wickedness will be stubble
וְלִהַט אֹתָם 3:19d
and the coming day will set them ablaze
הַיּוֹם הַבָּא
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 3:19f
the Lord of hosts said
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲזֹב לָהֶם
that will not leave them
שֹׁרֶשׁ וְעָנָף 3:19g
root or branch
וְזָרְחָה לָכֶם 3:20a
But to you will appear
יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי 3:20b
fearers of my name
שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה 3:20c
the sun of righteousness
וּמַרְפֵּא בִּכְנָפָיהָ 3:20d
and healing in its wings
וִיצָאתֶם 3:20e
And you will go out
וּפִשְׁתֶּם כְּעֶגְלֵי מַרְבֵּק 3:20f
and you will jump like calves from the stall
וְעַסּוֹתֶם רְשָׁעִים 3:21a
and you will crush the wicked
כִּי־יִהְיוּ אֵפֶר תַּחַת כַּפּוֹת רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם 3:21b
for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה 3:21c
which I am making
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 3:21d
The Lord of hosts said
זִכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי 3:22a
Remember the teaching of my servant Moses
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְחֹרֵב עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל 3:22b
which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel
חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים 3:22c
statutes and judgments
הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֵת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא 3:23a
I am about to send for your benefit the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and frightening Day of the Lord
וְהֵשִׁיב לֵב־אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים 3:24a
And he will bring back the heart of the fathers to the sons
וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם 3:24b
and the heart of the sons to their fathers
פֶּן־אָבוֹא 3:24c
Lest I would come

3:24d וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם
and smite the land with a ban